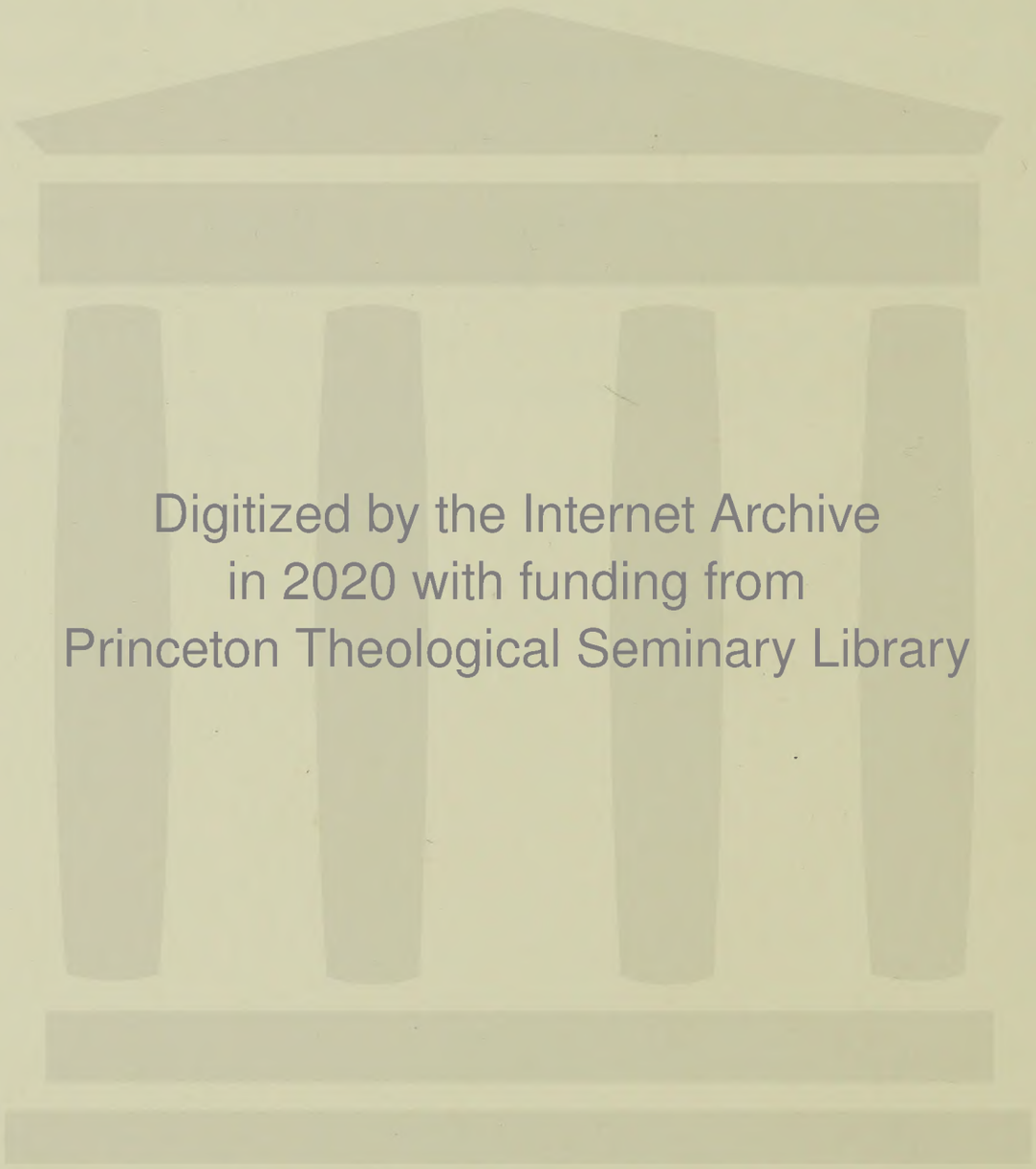

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BOOK REVIEWS

Editorial

Koinonia Journal was created for the promotion of interdisciplinary dialogue—to encourage student discussion among and between the various fields of religious studies. From the beginning, there has also been a secondary purpose—to include students everywhere as full partners in these conversations. With this issue, which marks the end of our fifth year of publication, and with the issue to follow shortly in the spring, we are quite evidently *on the way* toward meeting this secondary purpose. Thanks to the generous financial support of Princeton Theological Seminary, the editorial board has increased its promotional activity on behalf of the journal. As a result, we have received manuscripts for this issue from students at Emory, Stanford, and the University of Chicago. Our hope is that this trend will continue and that our success with regard to this secondary purpose will encourage more vigilance in our pursuit of the primary purpose, the promotion of interdisciplinary dialogue.

In this issue of *Koinonia Journal*, Nadav Caine suggests that the statements of Wittgenstein, Davidson, and Rorty are helpful for explaining much of everyday existence. However, Caine finds their statements less than adequate for addressing religious experience, especially as it is described by Heschel and Buber. Caine laments the gulf that has developed between scholars in religious studies, who are willing to speak of religious experience, of God,

and of faith—and those in philosophy, who categorize such speech as illogical and naive. It is always a stretch to bring five such significant figures into conversation together—and one always runs the risk that one's own voice will be lost amidst such august company. However, Caine manages to demonstrate certain inconsistencies in the work of the three philosophers, certain gaps, which appear in stark contrast when juxtaposed with the statements of Heschel and Buber. It is Caine's suggestion that, with the waning of logical positivism, there should once again be a place for the discussion of religious experience in philosophical inquiry. Caine's article is a call for philosophers to reexamine religious insight, not as *answer*, but as *question*—as wonder and as the fear of God.

Tod Linafelt, following several recent studies of the final form of the book of Isaiah, proposes a reading of the servant passages that places them into conversation with the whole of Isaiah. Linafelt chooses for his purpose to focus on the patterns of speech and silence in the servant passages. These patterns, because they are found throughout the book of Isaiah, allow Linafelt to compare and contrast the servant of the latter chapters with figures found in the earlier chapters of Isaiah. According to Linafelt, Israel—represented at first by prophet and king but later independently—moves from silence to speech as one reads from the beginning to the end of the book of Isaiah.

Mathew Schmalz and Chandra Shekar Soans explore alternate visions of Hindu-Christian dialogue, and both choose Christian and Hindu mysticism as their conversational meeting point. Both authors are mindful of the dangers of identifying Christianity too closely with either Eastern or Western cultural traditions, though both also understand that historically (with colonialism in India) the danger of identifying Christianity with a particular culture has been far greater on the Western side of the equation. The authors are striving to be both authentically Indian and Christian—in a paraphrase of Sadhu Sunder Sing, to drink the water of life from an Indian cup. The authors choose different his-

torical figures and different Indian mystical traditions for their focus—with Schmalz concentrating on the *sannyasa* of Abhishiktananda and Soans on the *bhakti marga* of Sadhu Sunder Sing. With their careful analyses of the writings of these two Indian writers, both essays will be of practical help for those who are struggling with the particular questions of a truly Indian Christianity. However, as Schmalz makes clear with his invocations of Gadamer, Lindbeck, Tracy, and Wittgenstein, the work of contextualization (whether Eastern or Western, Indian or North American) is a part of the broader postmodern task.

The postmodern cliché, the *universal* (!) to which those who claim to be postmodern appeal, is that we are universally particular. Meaning is created and shared by particular persons in particular contexts. For Caine, the emphasis on particularity in recent philosophical discourse suggests that there is once again a meaningful place for religion and religious experience in the public philosophical arena. For Linafelt, though his interest in recent philosophical discourse is perhaps less immediately evident, the interest in patterns of speech and silence is tied to an analysis of reality as a social construct—i.e., as it is created and shared by particular communities. Finally, Schmalz and Soans explore the areas that are increasingly problematic for postmodern thought—the areas where particular communities meet (East and West), where particular traditions clash (Catholic, Hindu, colonial, indigenous), and where particular individuals hold allegiances to more than one particular community.

This issue of *Koinonia* also includes a selection of critical reviews of recent books in religion. These reviews are presented according to discipline in the following order: biblical studies, theology, ethics, religion and society, church history, missions and ecumenics, history of religions, and practical theology. One or more disciplines may not be represented in any given issue.

—GREGORY L. GLOVER

KOINONIA V/2 (1993) 141-173

Philosophical Prejudice and Religious Self-Understanding: Experience of "The World" in Heschel, Buber, Wittgenstein, Davidson, and Rorty

NADAV CAINE

INTRODUCTION

THE ANTIPATHY WHICH HAS OFTEN DEVELOPED BETWEEN THE disciplines of philosophy and religious studies has troubled some of the religious thinkers and philosophers of the past century. The kind of religious philosophy that flourished in earlier times under Kant and Hegel—or even the kinds of sympathies declared in the arguments of American thinkers like James and Royce as the twentieth-century philosophical era dawned—show us by contrast how strained and difficult it is to attempt a dialogue between the two disciplines today. Certainly, there are established academicians who venture to cross the divide between the disciplines of religion and philosophy—and, just as certainly, there are students who, as logical positivism wanes, struggle with re-evaluating the epistemological standing of religion relative to science. These students and their professors are performing necessary tasks. Nevertheless, if such work is to move beyond piecemeal intellectual exercises, the more comprehensive task of reevaluating the role of experience in both philosophy and theol-

ogy will need to be performed. This task should not be neglected out of fear that one may drop one's philosophical guard or appear naive. Neither should one fear that God and faith will end up on one side, and logical, analytical thinking on the other. Such fears only reinforce the divide.

As Wittgenstein pointed out, a lack of investigation into a matter is often due to a particular picture, perhaps even untested, of how things work. He himself sought to displace many such pictures common in philosophy. Though he purported to "leave things as they are," he nevertheless suggested that we displace some misleading pictures. I propose to examine a particular picture of experience of "the world" now operative in the philosophy inspired by Wittgenstein. I will then examine the significance and applicability of this picture for the understanding of religious experience as it is articulated by Abraham Joshua Heschel and Martin Buber. Finally, I will suggest possible reevaluations of this picture rooted in the work of Wittgenstein himself.

One of Wittgenstein's major concerns was that philosophers not conceive of their task as that of offering quasi-mechanistic explanations of how phenomena—such as mind, language, ethics, and cognition—work, but that they use only the method of description to displace awkward pictures and to solve intellectual riddles. Yet, Wittgenstein *did* offer particular pictures and descriptions. I wish to take up these descriptions to see whether they may be of assistance in overcoming the obstacles in the dialogue between philosophical and religious thought. I suggest this paper as an experiment: to determine whether we can say something intelligent about how God or religious experience may play a part in our cognitive lives and to determine why certain philosophical ways of thinking may be prejudiced against this.

HOW WE SEE

Wittgenstein's later philosophy breaks with much of the way in which language and cognition were conceived in early twentieth-century philosophy. For example, Wittgenstein broke with the

kind of materialist, empiricist epistemology that privileges perceptual knowledge of the natural-scientific world by its contention that our neural mechanism perceives shapes, colours, and so on—collectively referred to as "sense-data"—from which inferences such as "it is raining," "the cat is on the mat," or "this is my hand" are naturally drawn.

> Does it *follow* from the sense-impressions which I get that there is a chair over there?—How can a *proposition* follow from sense-impressions? Well, does it follow from the propositions which describe the sense-impressions? No.—But don't I infer that a chair is there from impressions, from sense-data?—I make no inference!—and yet I sometimes do. I see a photograph for example, and say "There must have been a chair over there." That is an inference; but not one belonging to logic. An inference is a transition to an assertion ... . (Wittgenstein 1958:§486)

With these points, Wittgenstein is criticizing a metaphysics of perception based on sense-data. In keeping with his emphasis on what is plain to view, he appeals to the common, uncomplicated use of "infer"—when we consciously draw one proposition from another—to deflate any appeal to an unconscious inferring (perhaps of "essences") that we might suppose the mind to do independently of us. "I just see a chair," Wittgenstein might have added here, "I do not make an inference that a chair is before me." By removing the extra step of grounding perception in laws of the mind (laws of inference from sense-impressions), Wittgenstein is eliminating the barrier that certain epistemologies erect between those facts which the human mind naturally produces from a perception of the world independent of a person's or culture's identity—facts "given" to us, so to speak—and those facts which *we* are involved in embellishing or projecting. Wittgenstein eliminates this philosophical talk of the mind here: we see what we see.

When this remark is taken together with one of the central notions in the *Philosophical Investigations*, that of family-resemblances, a powerful picture of how we see presents itself. Wittgenstein first uses this notion to argue that there is no single essence common to language-games, just as there is no single essence which comprehends all games.

> ... What is common to them all?—Don't say: "There *must* be something common, or they would not be called 'games'"—but *look and see* whether there is anything common to all.—For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to *all*, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series at that. To repeat: don't think, but look! (Wittgenstein 1958:§66)

Wittgenstein notes certain features of games and how these features may (or may not) be present in a variety of ways in any given game—e.g., that games are amusing and involve winning (or losing), competition, and manipulation of skills (or relying on luck).

> I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than "family resemblances"; for the various resemblances between members of a family: build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament, etc. etc. overlap and criss-cross in the same way.—And I shall say: "games" form a family ... . (Wittgenstein 1958:§67)

Wittgenstein is making a point about mistakenly looking for the essence of the concept of "game." However, in his attempt to form a philosophical explanation of how language works, he immediately introduces the concept of "red" (and of other colors) and of "leaf" as similar, thus adding issues of perception or "*seeing what is common*" (1958:§72) to those of philosophical explanation. He notes that there is no one "redness" that is the

"common thing" of all red colors, but that they are different examples grouped under one family-resemblance concept. Similarly, we may have a particular "schema" of the typical leaf in mind when asked to think of a leaf, but we understand the schema "as a *schema*," as a general example, and not as a definition of leafness. In fact, we may be willing to call something a leaf which resembles that schema very little. Many of our most important concepts tend to be vague in these ways (1958:§71 and §76), and to work perfectly well as vague. Such vagueness needs to be proscribed only for particular purposes in particular contexts (when legislating, for example).

If we think of "chair" as a family-resemblance concept, then we are left with a powerful picture of human perception. When we take an ordinary-language view of "I just see a chair," as Wittgenstein does above, this family-resemblance concept (chair) groups together many things that may not even share a common property. Its limits may be unclear, even disputable in some contexts (e.g., a boulder, a stool, or an unusual sculpture). In such an instance, without making inferences, we perceive objects under descriptions. However, we perceive these objects under descriptions that are culturally-conditioned, not metaphysically-conditioned. Without a metaphysical barrier between natural-scientific properties (e.g., redness or snow-ness) and the other sorts of properties which we might claim to apply non-inferentially to objects or situations, we pay the price of being realists with regard to morality and aesthetics, as well as science. We acknowledge that our "seeing" is wrapped up in our socialization. For example, our socialization might affect our recognition of an old person's dignity, a person's suffering (perceived, for example, by a Buddhist), a car's bulkiness, a painting's ugliness, an actor's awkardness, or a wontonly cruel person's evilness. In this regard, Wittgenstein repeatedly discusses how children learn concepts and, indeed, often leaves us with a fairly ethnocentric picture of conceptual development in children. If objects come to us as descriptions—i.e., based on our learning of our culture's

groupings of phenomena rather than on laws of the neural mechanism of any functioning *Homo sapiens*—then we must acknowledge the ethnocentric worldview that informs perception itself. This is our "way of seeing" the world.

Now we can better understand Wittgenstein's contention that propositions are not inferred (normally) from sense-data. Seeing a person as a suffering human being is not the same thing as making an inference that a person is suffering. Donald Davidson draws out this point by using Wittgenstein's duck-rabbit picture, which, depending on how you look at it, looks like a duck or like a rabbit (the rabbit-ears are the duck's bill, and so on).

> If I show you Wittgenstein's duck-rabbit, and I say, "It's a duck", then with luck you see it as a duck; if I say, "It's a rabbit", you see it as a rabbit. But no proposition expresses what I have led you to see. Perhaps you have come to realize that the drawing can be seen as a duck or as a rabbit. But one could come to know this without ever seeing the drawing as a duck or as a rabbit. Seeing as is not seeing that. (Davidson 1978:263).

Similarly, a proposition cannot necessarily express what is common to the examples of a family-resemblance concept, though the grouping informs our way of seeing the world.

PHILOSOPHICAL LESSONS: DAVIDSON AND RORTY

Davidson, like a number of philosophers in recent decades, has suggested that there is a crisis in the philosophical usefulness of the expression "the world." The notion that we impose a conceptual scheme on "the world" is incoherent, Davidson argues, for it assumes an uninterpreted world—i.e., something of which we have no experience but onto which we supposedly lay our concepts. In other words, the idea of conceptual schemes, "systems of categories that give form to the data of sensation" and which are the "points of view from which individuals, cultures, or peri-

ods survey the passing scene," is misguided because it assumes a mediation of the world by our scheme (Davidson 1974:183). This is not unlike the empiricist assumption of a mediation of the world by laws of the mind, though in a different way. I just see a chair: there is no philosophically useful reason for assuming that my mind takes sense-data, plugs them into my learned conceptual scheme, and hands me a proposition that there is a chair over there. I see *as*, I do not normally see *that*.

Davidson argues that conceptual-scheme relativism is incoherent, for if there is no "reality" or "truth" *separable from* a scheme, then there is no "reality" or "truth" *relative to* a scheme. He concludes:

> In giving up dependence on the concept of an uninterpreted reality, something outside all schemes and science, we do not relinquish the notion of objective truth—quite the contrary. Given the dogma of a dualism of scheme and reality, we get conceptual relativity, and truth relative to a scheme ... . In giving up the dualism of scheme and world, we do not give up the world, but re-establish unmediated touch with the familiar objects whose antics make our sentences and opinions true or false. (1974:198)

After first reading the anti-essentialist and anti-empiricist remarks of the *Philosophical Investigations*, we might have despaired of our way of seeing's distance from what there is to be seen, since our concepts seem so little grounded in the world. However, Davidson sobers us up. If we can give up the "dogma" of a separation of world and concepts, he promises to collapse that distance by restoring to us "unmediated touch" with our world, and along with it "the notion of objective truth." Giving up the notion of an unconceptualized world seems a small price to pay for such a bounty. We might remind ourselves, reflecting on Wittgenstein, that the connections involved in family-resemblance are not less real for being irreducible to a definition. In fact,

Davidson's essay is especially insightful in its contention that we might wonder how *radically* different two supposed conceptual schemes could really be, a point which deflects the pull toward relativism.

The correspondence theory of truth, whether used in arguments concerning realism or relativism, has been criticized by numerous philosophers for requiring the presupposition that an interpretion-free world can make theory-dependent propositions true or false. Hilary Putnam makes this criticism:

> If objects are, at least when you get small enough or large enough, or theoretical enough, theory-dependent, then the whole idea of truth's being defined or explained in terms of a "correspondence" between items in a language and items in a fixed theory-independent reality has to be given up. (1990:41)

Altough Putnam is alluding to a vast philosophical literature regarding notions of "truth," one general lesson often drawn from the demise of the correspondence theory is the restoration of our concepts to the world, as Davidson suggested. A comparison of our concepts with the world is itself a picture which has suggested to many that natural-scientific propositions alone are capable of such a comparison, and therefore of having truth-value. After all, to what in "the world" can I compare the propositions "God is merciful," "The human is endowed with dignity," or "Torture is wrong?" On the other hand, propositions like "The book is red" or "It is snowing" seem easily comparable to an inert, given reality. But various sorts of materialism lose their appeal when this distinction is questioned, when this inert reality is given up, and so "reality" or "the world" is again imbued with its moral, aesthetic, and even religious elements.

One question that has disturbed some philosophers who acknowledge this philosophical turn, however, concerns the role of socialization into our world—a question implied by

Wittgenstein's work. Must we not acknowledge our ethnocentric perspective? Davidson speaks to this concern when he tells us that, on the one hand, it is not sensible to think that different cultures' schemes differ radically from our own and that, on the other hand, we should resist the philosopher's penchant for performing the "homey task" of describing our conceptual scheme. According to Davidson, such a description would assume "rival systems" (1974:183). Richard Rorty, one of Davidson's most enthusiastic commentators, suggests that we cannot but think of our situation as one of "irony." We understand that our own way of seeing is culturally and historically contingent, that it is not based on "the intrinsic nature of things," and that it is continually changing as redescription takes place. Nevertheless, we are committed to the projects and ideals of our own way of seeing: hence his notorious formulation, what "we North Atlantic (post-modernist) bourgeois liberals believe ... " (Rorty 1989). We acknowledge our ethnocentric outlook, but consider it an important principle not to be too ethnocentric when dealing with other cultures (see Rorty 1991).

THE WORLD AND RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

A serious question is whether the price of giving up the theory-independent world is as easily paid as Davidson suggests. I will argue that while the price of the *philosophical use* of the notion is easily paid, the *ordinary use* should not be proscribed. It is the ordinary use which lies at the heart of the religious self-understanding of thinkers like Abraham Joshua Heschel and Martin Buber—self-understandings which may not necessarily make philosophically objectionable claims.

Heschel explains that religious thinking begins in those "moments" when a person has a raw experience of "the world" which inspires "radical amazement."

> Thus, unlike scientific thinking, understanding for the realness of God does not come about by way of syllogism, by

> a series of abstractions, by a thinking that proceeds from concept to concept, but by way of insights. The ultimate insight is the outcome of *moments* when we are stirred beyond words, of instants of wonder, awe, praise, fear, trembling and radical amazement ... . It is at the climax of such moments that we attain the certainty that life has a meaning, that time is more than evanescence, that beyond all being there is someone who cares. (Heschel 1955:131)

The hallmark of these moments is that we "abandon the pretense of being acquainted with the world" and we experience "perceptions" which are something of a mystery even to ourselves—i.e., we "grasp" them even though they "are beyond words." Heschel's point is that such moments occur only when we put aside the descriptions under which the world is "familiar" to us, when we no longer experience the world in "unmediated touch with the *familiar* objects whose antics make our sentences true and false." Heschel's is, by contrast, a kind of knowledge *by in-acquaintance*. A predisposition to such experience, what we might call a certain sensibility, may be key to having such experiences. Since these moments are "lived on the level of the ineffable," we might characterize Heschel's sensibility as one of a certain kind of "openness" to a world without descriptions already placed upon it. Furthermore, we might consider "humility" an important aspect, since we must put aside "the pretense" of those descriptions as adequate. Without such a sensibility, we may not be able to cultivate an ongoing life in which this experience plays a part, just as a "sour" heart is not open to love. "Ultimate insight takes place on the presymbolic, preconceptual level of thinking," explains Heschel: "It is difficult, indeed, to transpose insights phrased in the presymbolic language of inner events into the symbolic language of concepts" (Heschel 1955:131).

Such talk of an experience which is preconceptual may sound philosophically offensive. Philosophers often take it as an axiom that thinking must take place in language, so "pre-

conceptual thinking" is a non-starter. Heschel counters this by saying that some kind of experience really does take place at this level, and it *leads* to thinking, which of course takes place in conceptualization or already conceptualized terms. The experience inspires conceptual thinking in its need to be grasped. As Heschel puts it, "in conceptual thinking, what is clear and evident at one moment remains clear and evident at all other moments. Ultimate insights, on the other hand, are events, rather than a permanent state of mind; what is clear at one moment may subsequently be obscured" (Heschel 1955:131–133).

There is not enough room here for a full exposition of Heschel's theology, but it is important to note that these moments do not constitute religion. For Heschel, these moments are rather the "root" or "beginning" of religiosity in Jewish self-understanding. He draws our attention to the primary Biblical religious virtue (glossed in the Zohar) of *yirʾâ*, which should be translated as "awe" rather than "fear"—the latter being in many ways "the antithesis" of awe (Heschel 1955:77). Religiosity comes from *yirʾâ* rather than from belief or faith alone. Thus, Heschel contrasts the religious person of the Bible, *yārēʾ haššēm*, with the religious person of Islam, *muʾmin*, "believer" (Heschel 1955:77). Awe leads to reverence, a concept of central importance for Heschel. In these moments, when we experience the raw world, we feel that (in a sense) God is contacting us. We are not merely reacting to an inert or familiar world; we understand our reaction as *response*. This is why faithfulness to these moments leads to religious faith in the context of the community's religion. In this sense, awe of the world and awe of God are closely aligned. "In Judaism, *yirat hashem*, the 'awe of God,' or *yirat shamayim*, the 'awe of heaven,' is almost equivalent to the word "religion" (Heschel 1955:77). We are responding to the God who speaks to us through the ineffable.

A relationship to God is formed. The awe leads to reverence for God, cultivation of religiosity, wisdom, an appreciation of God as a "presence" (not unlike a person whose presence is felt or

appreciated but who is physically absent), and a recognition that the "universe is full of a glory (*kavod*) that surpasses man [*sic*] and his mind, but is of eternal meaning to Him who made it possible" (Heschel 1955:78, 82–83, 105). With Heschel, we come to better understand how we listen to God—i.e., "beyond our reasoning and beyond our believing, there is a *preconceptual* faculty that senses the glory, the presence of the Divine. ... All we have is an awareness of something that can be neither conceptualized nor symbolized. ... We may sense that He is, not what He is" (Heschel 1955:108).

This awareness leads us to wonder how we can respond in action, what God wants from us. Unlike philosophy's question "*about* God," religion's question is "*from* God" and "is concerned with our personal answer to the problem that is addressed to us in the facts and events of the world and our own experience. Unlike questions of science ... the ultimate question gives us no rest. Every one of us is called upon to answer" (Heschel 1955:110–111).

PRECONCEPTUAL KNOWLEDGE

In what sense do these experiences of "the world" constitute knowledge? Here we must be careful to look at how Heschel is using the term. In terms of God, he has stated that our "awareness" is "*that* God is" and not "*what* God is." He has further characterized the effect as that of "certainty." These experiences lead us to posit God, philosophically speaking, as an "ontological presupposition." Thus, our experience of the world requires of us that we raise from the depths of the mind an ontological presupposition which makes certainty an intellectually understandable response. "The meaning and verification of the ontological presupposition are attained in rare *moments of insight*" (Heschel 1955:114). Because this knowledge is based on unusual experiences, it is not easily conveyed or demonstrated. Nevertheless, the knowledge is based on experiences of the world and not merely on faith or

obeisance to intellectual authority in the community.[1] If a person has never had an experience which leads to faith in God, then there may be no way to demonstrate God's "thatness" to the person. It may be necessary to ask whether others have had our same, or a similar, experience. The faith is in the experience rather than in the conceptualization. In fact, the assertion that "God is" does not do justice to the indemonstrable experience. "Such an assertion would constitute a leap if the assertion constituted an addition to our ineffable awareness of God. The truth, however, is that to say 'God is' means less than what our immediate awareness contains. *The statement 'God is' is an understatement*" (Heschel 1955:120–121). Heschel uses the word "knowledge," then, not to connote that which is demonstrable, but to remind us of those "amazing moments" of awareness that occur preconceptually. We come to "know" God through our experiences in the world, through scripture, and through prayer—but not through a knowledge acquired by the analysis of empirical data.

If the knowledge gained is not easily demonstrated, then how is it to be conveyed? Heschel takes a position common to many religious thinkers by emphasizing the use of analogy and parable. In this instance, Heschel turns to the revered medieval Jewish philosopher Moses Maimonides for guidance. Maimonides writes:

> When [one who has attained deeper insights] tries to teach others, he has to contend with the same difficulty which faced him in his own study, namely, that matters become clear for a moment and then recede into obscurity ... . For

[1] Although it is sometimes assumed that Jewish faith is based solely on a respect for the authority of the laws given at Sinai, one should take note of the crucial Rabbinical debate over whether an "Oral Torah" was also given at Sinai, a Torah which vouchsafes the authority of the kinds of revelation found in the interpretations and stories of the wisest scholars of the community.

> this reason when any metaphysician and theologian, in possession of some truth, intends to impart of his science, he will not do so except in similes and riddles. (Heschel 1955:135)

Though Maimonides emphasizes "similes and riddles," we might expand this theme to include analogy, stories and parables—e.g., as evidenced in Rabbinic Agada, Zen koans and Jesus's parables. These may have no one common essence, but they do seem to share an important family-resemblance. In as much as they address experiences of God, various scriptures also have a family-resemblance—i.e., that of "witnessing." Witnessing points to the fact that religious thinking is not concerned merely with "entertaining a concept of God," but with "the ability to articulate a memory of moments of illumination by His presence: 'Ye are My witnesses'" (Heschel 1955:140).

A WORLD OF OBJECTS

It is interesting that Heschel does not limit our religious experiences and consequent knowledge to the world as a whole, though objects themselves may be a source of revelation. These experiences are, again, marked by openness and humility: to know a thing, one puts aside accepted descriptions of it.

Heschel's approach is not unlike Martin Buber's relational theology in this regard. In *I and Thou*, for example, Buber distinguishes between the knowing of objects (including persons) under the descriptions we are used to, the I-It "experience," and letting the object tell us something about itself, the I-You "relation" (Buber 1970:56). As an It, the object is experienced in terms of our descriptions of its various particular aspects rather than as a unity. By contrast, Buber explains, "the human being to whom I say You I do not experience. But I stand in relation to him, in the sacred basic word. Only when I step out of this do I experience him again. Experience is remoteness from You" (Buber 1970:59-60).

Experience, Buber acknowledges, is inevitable. The goal of "relation" is to have moments of insight which put experience in a different perspective—i.e., the object as a unity speaks to us in such a way that the particularities are viewed more in *his* or *her* light. In these moments, the You may not speak to us in its own language exactly. "But how can we incorporate into the world of the basic word what lies outside language?" (Buber 1970:57). In order to explain this, Buber uses the example of a creation of art.

> What is required is a deed that a man [*sic*] does with his whole being: if he commits it and speaks with his being the basic word to the form that appears, then the creative power is released and the work comes into being ... . The form that confronts me I cannot experience nor describe; I can only actualize it. And yet I see it, radiant in the splendor of the confrontation, far more clearly than all clarity of the experienced world. (Buber 1970:60–61)

PHILOSOPHICAL OBJECTIONS

Earlier we noted various philosophical problems with an unconceptualized world. We wanted to avoid the temptation to think of "truth" as a relation between concepts and the unconceptualized world. One reason for this was that we wanted to avoid thinking of one proper description for reality, one final or perfect vocabulary in which the world speaks to us independently of our conceptualizations. Heschel's account does not establish a theory of truth. In fact, though the world may speak to us in one way, it does so only preconceptually. It is we who try to put it into our own language or thoughts. By its nature, the "reality" that is confronted during these moments is ineffable and can never be fully described in speech. When God speaks to us, we can describe it at best only as a mumble, "a spiritual suggestiveness of reality" (Heschel 1955:106). This is not to downplay the experience, or its impact on us. It is a traditional Jewish position that we do not have the clear communication with God that Moses had

(and that even Moses did not always understand God's will). Buber alludes to another experience of the ineffable, that of Isaiah 6:1 (where Isaiah sees the train of God's robe), when he states that "we gaze toward the train of the eternal You" (Buber 1970:57).

An unconceptualized reality is asserted by Heschel, but not one that makes our thoughts true or false. There is no applicable verification theory. We cannot philosophically "give grounds" for our knowledge by pointing to anything in this unconceptualized reality or world: we may be limited to asking of another whether he or she has had the experience which leads to the knowledge or not. Faith is crucial here: we have faith that our insights add up to something, but no verification of our formulations. We cannot have a "best conceptual scheme," for it would have to apply to "the ineffable" or "the mystery," which is as ridiculous for Heschel as it is for Davidson.

What is not ridiculous for Heschel is that there is a reality separable from a scheme, a reality which can be experienced. Though Davidson's formulations run counter to this, there does not seem to be a clear philosophical objection to it, as long as "reality" is properly characterized. We might think of Heschel's formulations of "the world" in the same way. In fact, the unsettling experience of the familiar *as unfamiliar* is well-known to many of us. These experiences may occur with objects, a work of art, a loved one, or raw nature. Here, experiencing the object as an unconceptualized, or preconceptualized reality, has an ordinary, non-philosophical use. We see the object *as* something inert or as something mysterious: we might even say something like "I don't know what to make of it." For example, as we gaze into the eyes of lover during an embrace, we may feel that we have never experienced this person in quit this way before. The "you" is unfamiliar. Heschel's use of such experiences is theological, but it is nevertheless helpful to identify the more popular use.

By confusing the ordinary and the philosophical uses, philosophers may draw conclusions unnecessarily exclusive of

religious perspectives, though religious persons themselves may make much of the ordinary usage. Davidson excludes such perspectives, I suggest, when he remarks that there is no reality separate from a conceptual scheme. Rorty does the same by explicitly drawing antireligious conclusions from his readings of Davidson and Wittgenstein:

> The very idea that the world or the self has an intrinsic nature—one which the physicist or the poet may have glimpsed—is a remnant of the idea that the world is a divine creation, the work of someone who had something in mind, who Himself spoke some language in which He described His own project ... . To drop the idea of languages as representations, and to be thoroughly Wittgensteinian in our approach to language, would be to de-divinize the world. (Rorty 1989:21)

Rorty mistakenly takes the acceptance that there is no one ultimate human vocabulary as a clear defeat of religious first principles. Heschel and Buber clearly agree, however, that language is a human tool full of human senses and concepts, and that it does not emanate from the world but from ourselves, even during religious moments. "The world" may be something we ought to respect, without thinking that it has a "preferred description of itself." In Buber's work, this distinction is less certain. Buber, nevertheless, implies that, though objects may reveal something of themselves not unlike their "preferred" description, the description is still by nature not linguistic, nor could it be. For neither thinker is there the implication that language should approximate a correct description of what is sensed in religious moments: conceptualization at best hints at some insight which may or may not be grasped. It would be impossible for language to conform to the mystery, the ineffable. Heschel and Buber desire to save the poet, rabbi, friend, mentor—at least *someone* who will put "us in touch with a realm which transcends the human." However, they would

consider such "touch" to have nothing to do with "respect for fact" in the philosophical sense. Like Wittgenstein, Heschel and Buber show little interest in talking about a "truth" that is "out there." For Buber and Heschel, the God whom we experience is the God who is present.

METAPHOR

One of Rorty's projects is to be faithful to Nietzsche's suggestion that we think of "truth" as "a mobile army of metaphors." He argues that we must not think of truth as a correct representation of *something*, like the world's self-description, but as metaphors that help us "cope" with the myriad of puzzles and challenges that confront us in the course of experience. As we devise ways of construing our world, however, we need not make the extra step of saying that our *new* world is closer to the *true*, theory-independent world. The ironist understands that what her world is today may be redescribed in her enlightenment tomorrow.

Rorty, concerned that we avoid thinking of the world in-itself, emphasizes that what we say gains all of its life from the problems which we encounter. In fact, in his essay on "Inquiry and Recontextualization," he suggests that we eliminate "the world" from our thinking in these matters and think instead of the human being as a collection of sentential attitudes which "reweave" themselves according to the problems which arise.

> Do not ask where the new beliefs and desires come from. Forget, for the moment, about the external world ... . Just assume new [beliefs and desires] keep popping up, and that some of them put strains on old beliefs and desires. (Rorty 1991:93)

He suggests this to cure us of looking for "something which lies outside the web of beliefs and desires"; the goal of inquiry is, after all, "simply the equilibrium state of the reweaving machine—a state which coincides with the satisfaction of the desires of the organism which contains that machine" (93).

The picture which Rorty presents is one that looks suspiciously algorithmic. In the course of experience or conversation, something in our web of beliefs is challenged (for example, two beliefs come into conflict), and the machine reweaves the beliefs and desires—perhaps by developing a metaphor—to restore equilibrium. However, Rorty avoids the trap of a rationalism in which truth is produced by "a thinking that proceeds from concept to concept" (Heschel 1955:131, above). Rorty escapes this trap by pointing out that new vocabularies are actually new creations, *not* simply improvements—through an algorithmic evolution or "inferential process"—over old vocabularies. His hero is the "strong poet"; i.e., one who "invents ... new tools to take the place of old tools" (Rorty 1989:12).

There is a tension in Rorty's position—i.e., our creation of metaphor at the same time both *arises from* conflicting beliefs and desires comprised of already understood descriptions and *rises above* these descriptions by creating new ones. If the inspiration for the new vocabulary does not proceed from the previous concepts, whence does it come? This is not an ill-conceived philosophical question, but rather an ordinary question we might ask of a Yeats or a Galileo. We can imagine these "strong poets" giving us Buberesque descriptions of inspiration and artistic creation in their converse with "the world" or the "object" under consideration. We can imagine Galileo or Einstein, or Wittgenstein or Coleridge or Frost telling us of a moment of insight in which they were led to create a new metaphor or new model. They would hardly say, "Well, I realized that the present vocabulary was inadequate to describe the data, so I invented a model that would."

Even Rorty acknowledges that the process of creating metaphors is rarely if ever "inferential," yet he does not allow careful consideration of the the question "Where do metaphors come from?" Instead, he immediately answers that new vocabularies arise from "gradual trial-and-error creation." By fiat, however, such an explanation excludes the poet's self-understanding; it

replaces insight with randomness. If a poet—e.g., Buber—were to describe the bringing forth an insight of It into the world, the poet might indeed say that the root of the insight was a sense received from the whole undescribed "it" (i.e., the object of description). This is not to say that "there is a reality behind the appearances," but that the present descriptions are inadequate (which Rorty would admit) and that a new reality must be called forth. Rorty again would agree that the new vocabulary brings forth a new reality, as long as the "reality" is not something separate from the object which "lies" there to be discovered.

If a philosophical use is not made of "discovery" here, then a Heschelian or Buberian ("Inventing is finding. Forming is discovery.") account is not objectionable. On the other hand, Rorty's overemphasis on the created thing as the only source of the new vocabulary is strained.

> This Wittgensteinian analogy between vocabularies and tools has one obvious drawback. The craftsman typically knows what job he needs to do before picking or inventing tools with which to do it. By contrast, someone like Galileo, Yeats, or Hegel (a "poet" in my wide sense of the term—the sense of "one who makes things new") is typically unable to make clear exactly what he wants to do before developing the language in which he succeeds in doing it. (Rorty 1989:13)

It may seem a minor point to stress the ways in which Rorty excludes Buber in this account of creation, when they are so similar in their emphasis on how the created thing reveals itself. The difference, however, is one of profound significance for religious self-understanding. In Heschel's and Buber's view, one has experienced the world—or particular objects—in particular ways if revelation has taken place. Specifically, such experiences must involve the discovery "that what we have long regarded as known is actually an enigma" (Heschel 1955:115).

Revelation, then, does not occur in words. Rather, the experience of revelation gives rise to the creation of forms. This experience is held to be of key religious and theological importance. It is not equivalent to trial-and-error (*contra* Rorty). Emphasizing the role of the created object at the expense of the experience which led to its creation, regardless of the praiseworthy philosophical motives, amounts to a systematic anti-religious prejudice. In fact, even in terms of philosophy, a tension results when "the world" is excluded from the philosophical picture of the development of new vocabularies, though the creation itself is acknowledged to transcend the old vocabularies. If Heschel's mention of "that which drives us toward knowledge" reminds Rorty too much of William James's statement that life is "a real fight in which something is eternally gained for the universe by success, [otherwise] it is no better than a game of private theatricals from which we may withdraw at will" (a sense to which Rorty takes exception), then Rorty should do more to resolve this tension in his own argument (Rorty 1979:174–175).

A similar tension betrays itself in the chapter on "The Contingency of Community" and in the essay, previously mentioned, on "Inquiry and Recontextualization." Rorty asks us to think of communication with other cultures or traditions as itself a form of inquiry, where beliefs come into conflict and new experiences are considered. Our task is to "extend the We" of North Atlantic liberalism to others while at the same time giving others the chance to challenge us, perhaps leading to the "reweaving" of our own beliefs, and therefore of the identity of "we." This is an attractive description of dialogue. However, there remains the tension of how we can be properly challenged to do this reweaving if all we do is to translate the beliefs and desires of others into our own language—and then plug these into our own "web" of beliefs and desires.

Those belief statements that do not comport to our own, will be judged lacking. Buber's account of I-You tells us more about how we can learn from others than Rorty's account of recontex-

tualization. After all, anthropologists, those who have lived and worked in other cultures, may often experience change during their work and afterward. This may happen, not because others offered better arguments, but because of the kinds of relational experience Buber himself describes. These changes may occur even when the other culture is not overtly reasoning with us or presenting arguments to influence or change us. We summon up these arguments ourselves through our conversation with "the other": often this summoning is more "relational," in Buber's sense, or "insightful," in Heschel's sense, than it is a mere translating of propositions to be fed into our reweaving machines. Buber's I-You may tell us more about the impetus for bringing African-Americans and women into the "we" of political equality than does Rorty's "extending the we" and "inquiry."

Rorty's "trial-and-error" description of the summoning of new metaphors takes on larger proportions in his emphasis on the "randomness" of "contingency." He asks us to think of "the constellations of causal forces which produced talk of DNA or of the Big Bang as of a piece with the causal forces which produced talk of 'secularization' or of 'late capitalism'," all of which are "the random factors which have made some things subjects of conversation for us and others not, have made some projects and not others possible and important" (Rorty 1989:16–17). Rorty also considers a mechanistic explanation:

> I can develop the contrast between the idea that the history of culture has a *telos*—such as the discovery of truth, or the emancipation of humanity—and the Nietzschean and Davidsonian picture which I am sketching by noting that the latter picture is compatible with a bleakly mechanical description of the relation between human beings and the rest of the universe. For genuine novelty can, after all, occur in a world of blind, contingent, mechanical forces. (Rorty 1989:17)

The random account and the mechanistic account are possible answers by Rorty to the question "Where did this new metaphor come from?" Rorty's point is that such accounts "hardly matter": what matters is the effect of the new metaphor. To Buber and Heschel, on the other hand, the account matters a great deal. Important to both the random and mechanistic accounts is that Rorty is entertaining a God's-eye point of view: from a God's-eye view, randomness is the rule, or from a God's-eye point of view, the mechanism of nature is the rule.

While Buber and Heschel recognize the contingency involved in creation, in the sense of the contingencies of language and of identity which play a part in the form given to insights, they nevertheless are free to draw more metaphysical implications for "where these metaphors come from." Heschel, as we have seen, indicates that the transcendent is the source of "endless meanings" instead of a single perfect description: he answers the creativity question religiously, and despite Rorty's rhetoric, he does so without violating Wittgensteinian lessons. For Heschel, the transcendent is not a blueprint of the world with one ultimate unified meaning, but is the *source* of "endless meanings" which arise in our moments of insights. It is noteworthy that the traditional Rabbinic idea of the Torah as the Lord's "blueprint" for the world was used to defend multiple interpretations of scripture—not a unified ideal interpretation, or God *tout simple* as the God of design. The Rabbis used the Torah-as-blueprint to discuss the revelation of the many divine meanings in the text and to support their project of multiple authentic interpretations. The idea was used to buttress the very idea of Oral Torah. As David Stern has pointed out, midrashic interpretation differs from modern literary-critical deconstructionist interpretation. Though the Rabbis understood the text to be "polysemic," they still viewed God as the "source" of meaning (1988:132–161). Rorty's deconstructionist leanings may obscure for him such a subtle, and yet crucial, distinction between scriptural polysemy and literary "indeterminacy." In a manner similar to that of the Rabbis, Buber

contends that there is an aspect of "discovery"—even during the "inventing" in which our contingencies play a role.

LESSONS OF WITTGENSTEIN?

Rorty explicitly bases his interpretation and use of "metaphor" on Davidson's "What Metaphors Mean" (cf. above on seeing-as vs. seeing-that). In that article, Davidson argues that there is no separate content to the metaphor for which the metaphor stands. Such a way of thinking is as misguided as thinking that every proposition has a logical content—a philosophical prejudice which Wittgenstein ravaged in the *Investigations*. The similarity is not coincidental: Davidson's thoughts on metaphor owe a great debt to his reading of Wittgenstein. He suggests that metaphor works as it does because it is a use of words that contrasts with their ordinary use.

A metaphor "makes us attend to some likeness, often a novel or surprising likeness, between two or more things" (Davidson 1978:247). It does this by making an unfamiliar connection between the thing and a familiar grouping "established by the ordinary meaning" of the relevant word. The metaphor has no "content," such as an identifiable shared property, which accounts for the likeness—just as the "ordinary meaning" may establish no identifiable shared property. Following Wittgenstein, Davidson points out that ordinary use is not normally based on an essential property shared by all things in the grouping invoked. Similarly, the metaphor adds a new and unusual item to the grouping. However, we should not think that the metaphor stands for a rhetorical attribution of this property or definition to the new item, for this would assume that groupings can be so analyzed. Davidson seems to be picking up on Wittgenstein's point that items which share family-resemblances do have similarities. However, the inability to produce a unified definition of the

similarity should not trouble philosophers. "Such similarity is natural and unsurprising to the extent that familiar ways of grouping objects are tied to usual meanings of usual words" (Davidson 1978:248).

An ordinary similarity may be that of "game": an essence or determinate meaning need not attach to the concept nor name the similarity. Moreover, ordinary language users understand the similarity, often family-resemblance style, just as they understand how to use the word. The metaphor adds another object to the grouping, which, by its out-of-the-ordinary placing in the group, makes a point. Metaphor is a new use of an old concept. If the metaphor becomes frequently used, it may lose its out-of-the-ordinary status and become an ordinary part of the grouping under the concept. Davidson uses "burned-up" and "mouths" as examples. "Burned-up," or "incensed," becomes the same thing as "angry"—but without the ordinary language user picturing fire and thus getting the metaphorical point. Similarly, we have come to accept that rivers and bottles have "mouths." As we become accustomed to the new uses, our way of "seeing-as" is changed.

Rorty picks up on Davidson's use of Wittgenstein as he sketches "an account of intellectual and moral progress which squares with Davidson's account of language," an account in which "[o]ld metaphors are constantly dying off into literalness, and then serving as a platform and foil for new metaphors" (1989:16). Rorty praises metaphor over inferential, rational thought because "metaphorical use is the sort which makes us get busy developing a new theory" (1989:17). It is creative; it breaks through the usual way of going about things. It becomes the lever of the new vocabularies he praises, new ways of seeing.

Has Rorty lost something from Wittgenstein in this chain of interpretation? Is being "thoroughly Wittgensteinian in our approach to language" really to "de-divinize the world" as Rorty suggests? The question, phrased in the light of Heschel and Buber, is to ask whether the world can *show* us new metaphors. Davidson is adamant in pointing out that metaphors draw our attention to an

aspect of "the world" and not "to what language is about" (1989:252–253). Yet, he exclusively uses examples of one person explaining a metaphor to another. He never speaks of what Wittgenstein might call "the dawning of an aspect" or of a likeness in the mind of one individual. This skews the way we might answer the question at hand, for it makes all inquiry look like dialogue. However, it is one thing for someone to tell me why a fetus is "a human being" or why it is a non-sentient "object," and another thing for me to come to this way of seeing myself. In the 1960s, it was one thing for whites to hear arguments that blacks should be seen as equal "human beings" and worthy to be treated as such, and another for conventional whites to come to that realization after witnessing the suffering caused by brutal attacks, or after developing a profound friendship with an African-American person or family. The latter example may have profound religious reverberations. Heschel, for example, understands the faith which springs from moments of insight caused by compassion to be the mark of a properly evolving and relevant religious tradition. Religion is dead without "the voice of compassion" (Heschel 1955:3).

Davidson and Rorty are wary of exploring this side of metaphor-dawning, it seems, because they wish to avoid talk of "the world" as the *source* of new descriptions. They consider it Wittgensteinian to accept that the world comes to us under non-inferentially made descriptions that are culturally conditioned. This conditioning can be altered, of course, by Davidson's Saturnians or Rorty's strong poets, but seemingly not by objects themselves *à la* Buber or by the presence of God *à la* Heschel. Wittgenstein, however, does not wish to constrict the realm of possible experience—a move which Davidson's and Rorty's conclusions would imply.

Earlier I suggested that Davidson and Rorty avoid talk of an uninterpreted world to avoid a dualism of scheme and world, while Heschel and Buber make ordinary use of the concept. Philosophically, one might complain that putting aside one's

scheme would be equivalent to doubting everything one takes for granted. Thus, the charges against the latter notion—charges that claim that such a doubting would amount to what Sabina Lovibond has called "cognitive collapse"—apply to this position as well (Lovibond 1983:203). Rorty argues in this way when he states that a Nietzsche or a Loyola only *seems* irrational or insane by our lights, rather than actually *being* wrong. If we were to truly understand such persons, we would have to abandon too many of the assumptions which constitute our canon of rationality. When we put too much aside, we border on irrationality or madness. Heschel seems to anticipate the philosophical worry that religious experience suggests a philosophically unacceptable cognitive collapse or irrationality when he states that "our insights of awe" should not be thought of as "signs of madness" and that we should not think of "the ultimate enigmas" as "the brink of chaos," but rather as "the shore of endless meanings." I take Heschel to be pointing here to the middle ground between giving up a scheme completely and being totally tied to the scheme.

An appropriate metaphor for this middle ground is that of a scheme consisting of Wittgensteinian sign-posts. Normally, our application of concepts is governed by rules, but application "is not everywhere bounded by rules" (Wittgenstein 1958:§84). "The sign-post is in order—if, under normal circumstances, it fulfils its purpose" (Wittgenstein 1958:§87). We might think of the world as coming to us under culturally-conditioned descriptions "under normal circumstances," just as dead metaphors are already used "under normal circumstances." However, there is no reason to suppose that one must always follow the sign-posts in only one way. Wittgenstein calls our attention to the fact that talk of sign-posts is most appropriate to talk of "empirical" propositions. Everything depends on what game one is playing: we cannot generalize about all concepts, for some may be more flexible than others.

For many concepts of religious import, there may be a great deal of flexibility. In fact, we might take Heschel's "knowledge by inacquaintance" as a suggestion that we follow the path, so to speak, in the opposite direction from that toward which a sign-post points. Buber, too, wants us to put aside the description under which we normally consider a person, and to see that person in a different light. This is not to say that we suspend all the sign-posts of our scheme: rather, this suspension relates to the more ordinary experience of trying to get as much as possible out of "normal circumstances." Again, if one is to have a religious experience of a particular place, a space, one may perhaps need to experience it under unusual conditions—i.e., conditions in which one intentionally loosens the rules. Whether this takes place in a tribal setting during initiation rites, or during Thoreau's walks in the woods, we can imagine that what is perceived is at first perceived in an unfamiliar way. As the individual grasps in various ways at descriptions or insights, he or she may well "station" these articulations at particular "sign-posts" (cf. Wittgenstein 1958:§257)—he or she is not bordering on cognitive collapse or madness, but is at the brink of mystery.

We should think, following Wittgenstein, that the grammar of religious articulations is especially flexible. It is part of the game here that the rules are flexible, perhaps even meant to be changed—as when one is expected to phrase insights in new, live metaphors. Further, Wittgenstein calls our attention to the fact that rule-following does not involve the "extra step" of thinking of the rule: it is a more or less automatic following of a "technique." That is its grammatical nature.

> Let us imagine a rule intimating to me which way I am to obey it; that is, as my eye travels along the line, a voice within me says: "*This* way!"—What is the difference between this process of obeying a kind of inspiration and

> that of obeying a rule? For they are surely not the same. In the case of inspiration I *await* direction. I shall not be able to teach anyone else my "technique" of following the line. (Wittgenstein 1958:§232)

Though Wittgenstein is making a point about rule-following, his contrast with "inspiration" is important. In inspiration, one "awaits direction"—one "hearkens;" one is "receptive." These are the marks of the preconceptual knowledge about which Heschel speaks. The grammar of such experience is precisely these marks, that one is not meant to follow the rule "in the same way I do." If, as I have suggested, the world may somehow "show" us a new likeness we did not notice before, inspire us to a new metaphor in our articulation of our insights, then the world itself—*via* our use of the sign-posts in our language, and not without any scheme whatsoever—changes our way of seeing the world, or a particular object in the world. "You have a new conception and interpret it as seeing a new object. ... What you have primarily discovered is a new way of looking at things. As if you had invented a new way of painting; or, again, a new metre, or a new kind of song" (Wittgenstein 1958:§401). Wittgenstein calls this a "grammatical *movement*" because—as with Davidson's metaphor, where one's attention is called to new likenesses in the world, or as Wittgenstein says, one sees "new connexions," or as with Rorty's "recontextualization"—the rules of one's "way of looking at things" are shifted (Wittgenstein 1958:§144).

With Wittgenstein's observation that what is perceived "in the dawning of an aspect is not a property of the object, but an internal relation between it and other objects," we are able to clarify another difference between Heschel's understanding of the divinized world and Rorty's (Wittgenstein 1958:IIxi, §212e). Rorty's divinized world is one in which objects have an intrinsic nature: Heschel's is a divinized world in which objects are a source of revelation about aspects of themselves. Heschel, therefore, can accept Wittgenstein's claim that one is not perceiving a

"property of the object" in-itself, but rather is using connections, understanding an "internal relation." This is another way of saying that insights rely on language for articulation, but are not themselves linguistically given. Heschel agrees with Rorty and Davidson: we cannot separate a specific content from our articulations; we cannot identify an essential property.

Heschel actually provides a religious gloss on this truth, a truth Rorty felt religious people did not understand. Namely, Heschel sees the non-definable nature of fundamental concepts as an open invitation for further revelation through "communion" with the subject. Heschel quotes from Plato's *Charmides* in which Socrates realizes that the concept "temperance" cannot be reduced to one definition. "I have been utterly defeated," says Socrates, "and have failed to discover what that is to which the imposer of names gave this name of temperance." Socrates says that it is possible for a human being to know (in a sort of way) that which he or she does not really know at all (Heschel 1955:103). We might think that the "imposer of names" is the divinity that Rorty has in mind, but Heschel's divinity is drawn in contradistinction, where God establishes no such properties. "The deepest doctrines 'do not admit of verbal expression like other studies,'" writes Heschel, quoting Plato:

> They can only be understood "as a result of continued application to the subject itself and communion therewith." Such understanding is "brought to birth in the soul on a sudden, as light that is kindled by a leaping spark, and thereafter it nourishes itself." (Heschel 1955:103)

Heschel's understanding of concepts is in agreement with Wittgenstein's emphasis on family-resemblance, and with Davidson's and Rorty's Wittgensteinian contention that concepts and metaphors cannot be analyzed with regard to their corresponding "content." Heschel draws the conclusion that there is no reason to dismiss the value of religious experience or inspiration

in our understanding of these concepts, or in our extension of them. "If our basic concepts are impregnable to analysis, then we must not be surprised that the ultimate answers are not attainable by reason alone" (1955:103). Of course, Heschel does not downplay the importance of education in the religious tradition, or, we might say, in the "games" which develop a religious way of seeing. Wittgenstein himself devotes a significant portion of the *Investigations* to how such concepts are taught. He notes that "teaching which is not meant to apply to anything but the examples given is different from that which '*points beyond*' them." (Wittgenstein 1958:§208). The teacher wants the other person to get the examples' "drift" rather than to "*guess* the essential thing" (Wittgenstein 1958:§210). We might apply this to religious education, especially when teaching theological concepts: a way of seeing is inculcated, but the fundamental concepts are gotten "by drift"; and since the examples or explanations "point beyond" themselves—using stories, parables, and poems, as well as creed—there is a degree of openness (depending, of course, on how liberal the constraints are in the education) in how the concepts play a part in experience. As Heschel notes, "If it is impossible to define 'goodness,' 'value,' or 'fact,' how should we ever succeed in defining what we mean by God?"

FINAL WORDS

Heschel's understanding of religion and of Judaism cannot be universalized to describe all religious experience or all theology. It is nevertheless a supremely valuable articulation of a particular—and one might say, particularly liberal—religious self-understanding. Heschel, contrary to what one has come to expect from religious writers, does not understand the world as endowed with properties named by the creator God. Religious insights, Heschel argues, are not insights into *the design* of the world, but are insights about the world that have their source in "wonder" at the world—i.e., in "a mystery, a question, not an answer" (Heschel 1955:110).

When the problematic notion of a particular blueprint for the world, a blueprint which we as humans are trying to copy in our own language, is put aside, a religious understanding of our experience of the world may be helpful in describing our creative transcendence of the pictures we already have—our suspension of the rules that are presently governing our way of seeing and our behavior. Philosophers like Davidson and Rorty, who follow Wittgenstein in understanding that our concepts do not copy reality, should be careful not to exclude the kinds of religious revelation—discussed by Heschel and Buber—that leave "the world" open to "show" us new aspects of itself. Such a religious perspective speaks to the gap found in Rorty between embracing creative, new metaphors and yet utilizing philosophical pictures which imply that perception and thinking "proceed from concept to concept." We might well learn from Wittgenstein's emphasis on the flexibility of rules and on "grammatical movements" in our way of looking at things, as we think of openness and humility as essential characteristics of the "games" employed in religious experience. Suspending rules and trying to experience an uninterpreted world which reveals new aspects of itself may sound philosophically problematic, but it is not. It may well be an ordinary and misunderstood part of a religious life.

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Speech and Silence in the Servant Passages: Towards a Final-Form Reading of the Book of Isaiah

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THE GROWTH OF SCHOLARLY INTEREST IN THE FINAL FORM of the book of Isaiah reflects a significant trend in much of contemporary biblical scholarship. Such interest with regard to Isaiah was no doubt largely precipitated by Brevard Childs's programmatic treatment of the book in his *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (1979:311–338). In that treatment, Childs attempted to move beyond historical-critical questions, which had been determined by the strict division of the book into a First Isaiah (chapters 1–39, dated to the 8th century) and a Second Isaiah (chapters 40–66, dated to the Babylonian exile).[1] Childs did not, of course, question the judgment that the material in chapters 40–66 reflects a much later historical context than chapters 1–39, but he did argue that "the theological context completely overshadows the historical" (1979:326). A number of important

[1] Following Bernhard Duhm (1922), some scholars posit a Third Isaiah (chapters 56–66, dated to the Persian period). While there is less of a consensus on this proposal, the distinction between chapters 1–39 and 40–66 has functioned as a virtual given.

studies have followed that of Childs and have discerned significant literary and theological connections between First and Second Isaiah.[2]

Also of interest for the study of Isaiah is the question of the servant figure. Prominently circumscribed from the rest of the book of Isaiah by Bernhard Duhm (1922) in 1892, the "servant passages" (42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13–53:12) have received enormous scholarly attention. The main point of contention has been the identity of the servant figure. The servant has been variously understood as (1) an anonymous contemporary of Second Isaiah; (2) Second Isaiah himself; (3) a group of people (i.e., Israel as a nation or a remnant); (4) the expected Davidic messiah; and (5) the city of Zion as a representative of Israel.[3]

In the present study, I will bring together these two interpretive trajectories and focus on the theme of "covenantal discourse." I borrow the phrase "covenantal discourse" from Harold Fisch (1988:118), who uses it to characterize the dialogue which, on the one hand, binds Israel to God and, on the other hand, provides the language, symbols, and modes of speech that make Israel's communal life possible.[4] More specifically, by tracing the themes of speech and silence through the four servant passages, I will make a proposal concerning not only the identity of the servant but also how the servant passages cohere within the final form of Isaiah.

[2] See, in particular, the studies of Clements (1982), Brueggemann (1984), Seitz (1988), and Conrad (1991).

[3] For a summary and bibliography of relevant material see Clines (1976:25–26).

[4] Fisch uses the term "covenant" in a somewhat broad sense, without specific reference to its political dimension in the Ancient Near East. Though the scope of this study precludes an in-depth theoretical treatment of "discourse," I am largely convinced by Berger's and Luckmann's notion of the "social construction of reality." According to this notion, "the most important vehicle for reality-maintenance is conversation" (1966:152). With regard to *covenantal* discourse, see Brueggemann (1991:27), who writes that for Israel, "when speaking and hearing are stopped, history comes to an end."

THE SERVANT FIGURE AS SPEAKING SUBJECT

What is striking about the servant passages, when read in light of an emphasis on speech, is the disparity in the nature of the servant figure as a speaking subject. In the first and last passages (42:1-4 and 52:13–53:12), for example, the servant is presented as one who characteristically does not speak. We may note in particular the following verses:[5]

> He will not cry or lift up his voice,
> or make it heard in the street.
> (42:2)

> He was oppressed and he was afflicted,
> yet he opened not his mouth;
> like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
> and like a sheep that is dumb,
> so he opened not his mouth.
> (53:7)

The absence of speech portrayed here reinforces, in concrete terms, the more general sense of the servant figure's powerlessness conveyed by the passages.

In the middle two servant passages (49:1-6 and 50:4-9), however, we find that the servant does not remain silent:

> Listen to me, O coastlands, and hearken, you peoples from afar.
> The Lord called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he named my name.
> He made my mouth like a sharp sword ... .
> (49:1-2)

[5] Unless otherwise noted all biblical quotes are from the Revised Standard Version.

> The Lord God has given me the tongue of those who are taught,
> that I may know how to sustain with a word, him that is weary.
>
> (50:4)

In short, there seems to be a vast difference between the silent servant of the first and last passages, and the servant of the middle passages who commands attention as a speaking subject.

If we are to adjudicate these differences, we may begin by referring to the proposal of Wilcox and Paton-Williams (1988) that there is a shift in the identity of the servant at the point of the second servant passage. Following Westermann (1969), they posit a transition in "the oracles of Deutero-Isaiah" at the midpoint of chapter 49. In chapters 40–48 there are seven explicit references to Israel as the servant (41:8; 44:1,2,21 [twice]; 45:4; 48:20). Only in chapter 49 do we run into difficulty identifying the servant as Israel, for here the servant is described both as *identical with* Israel (49:3) and as *having a mission to* Israel (49:5). Wilcox and Paton-Williams suggest that here the identification of the servant as Israel shifts to an identification of the servant as the prophet. The declaration of 49:3, "you are my servant Israel," becomes—according to this reading—the recommissioning of the *prophet* as the "*new* Israel." Their positing of this shift in the character of the servant is supported by the evidence that nowhere in chapters 49–55 is Israel referred to as the servant, in contrast with the seven times in chapters 40–48 cited above.

My own discussion of the servant figure will assume such a shift in identification, though I will argue for the shift at 49:4 rather than 49:1. I will consider the shift in identification in conjunction with the patterns of speech and silence we have identified in the servant passages—and will examine more closely the relationship of the servant passages to their surrounding literary

contexts. I will first look at each servant passage in light of these considerations individually and then conclude with a consideration of what our results contribute to the study of the book as a whole.

The First Servant Passage: 42:1-4

One aspect of the book of Isaiah's concern for what I have called covenantal discourse is Israel's ability to hear the speech of YHWH. This concern may be seen most dramatically in Second Isaiah's frequent repetition of the command to "hear" or "listen." Consider the following texts, for example:

> Listen to me in silence, O coastlands;
> let the peoples renew their strength.
> (41:1)

> Who among you will give ear to this,
> will attend and listen for the time to come?
> (42:23)

> But now hear, O Jacob my servant,
> Israel whom I have chosen!
> (44:1)

> Hearken to me, O house of Jacob,
> all the remnant of the house of Israel.
> (46:3)

> Hearken to me, you stubborn of heart,
> you who are far from deliverance.
> (46:12)

> Hear this, O house of Jacob,
> who are called by name of Israel.
> (48:1)

Assemble all of you and hear!
Who among them has declared these things?
(48:14)

Hearken to me, you who pursue deliverance,
you who seek the Lord.
(51:1)

Listen to me, my people,
and give ear to me, my nation.
(51:4)

There is evidence of this concern that Israel hear in First and Third Isaiah as well. For example, in 30:9 Israel is called a "rebellious people ... who will not hear the instruction of the Lord." Again, in 66:4 the reason given by YHWH for the rejection of the people's sacrifices is as follows:

because, when I called, no one answered,
when I spoke they did not listen.

A second aspect of covenantal discourse in Isaiah is that of speaking rightly about God. Thus, in 40:9 Israel is admonished to declare the "good tidings" of YHWH:

Get you up to a high mountain,
O Zion, herald of good tidings;
lift up your voice with strength,
O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,
lift it up, fear not;
Say to the cities of Judah,
"Behold your God!"

Again, this same theme is also found in texts from First and Third Isaiah. In 30:19 we read:

> Yea, O people in Zion who dwell in Jerusalem;
> you shall weep no more. He will surely be
> gracious to you at the sound of your cry;
> when he hears it he will answer you.

And in 65:1 YHWH says:

> I was ready to be sought by those who did not ask for
> me;
> I was ready to be found by those who did not seek me.
> I said, "Here am I, here am I," to a nation that did
> not call on my name.

As this last passage indicates, Israel seems unable to speak rightly about God. Either Israel remains conspicuously mute or, in the few instances where Israel's speech is described (but never voiced in the first person), Israel speaks wrongly (cf. 5:20; 30:10f; 40:27).

It should come as no surprise, then, that we find the servant Israel in chapter 42 silent. The nation has yet to assume its role as the one who speaks rightly about YHWH. That the servant is not *meant* to remain silent is made clear in 42:10, where YHWH admonishes Israel to:

> Sing to the Lord a new song,
> his praise from the end of the earth!

This is also hinted at in the contrast in chapter 41 between the servant of YHWH and "the false gods" who are incapable of speech. YHWH dares them to "set forth their case" (41:21) and to "tell us what is to come hereafter" (41:23). However, the false gods can only remain silent: "there was none who declared it, none who

proclaimed ... who, when I ask, gives an answer?" (41:28). The false gods and "the nations" cannot answer. Israel, however, as YHWH's partner in covenantal discourse, should be able to give witness to YHWH's deeds. But at this point in the book, Israel remains a broken people. Wilcox and Paton-Williams note that, "captive and discouraged, Israel is only fit for a passive role in the new thing that YHWH is doing" (1988:88). Or, in terms more congenial to my argument, Israel has yet to claim its proper role as speaking subject.

The Second Servant Passage: 49:1-6

It is this passage that has constituted the primary dilemma in identifying the servant, for here the servant is explicitly *called* Israel (verse 3) and at the same time said to have a mission *to* Israel (verse 5). It also presents a problem in terms of our analysis of the power of speech, for we saw that in chapter 42 the servant was described as silent. Yet here the servant is presented as one who speaks in the first person, who commands the attention of the "coastlands" and "peoples from afar," and who refers to the servant's own mouth as "like a sharp sword" (verse 2).

As indicated above, Wilcox and Paton-Williams have offered the intriguing notion that in chapter 49 the identity of the servant shifts from the nation Israel to the person of the prophet. Israel has failed to fulfill its mission as servant, and so the prophet is given that mission (to the nations), as well as his previous mission to Israel itself. This proposal does indeed deal quite nicely with the traditional problems raised in identifying the servant. Moreover, it accords well with our previous analysis of the servant figure of chapter 42 as failing to fulfill its role. In my judgment, however, the prophet is not given the role of servant until 49:4, rather than 49:1, as suggested by Wilcox and Paton-Williams.

My argument is that 49:1-3 is much more closely connected with the passage immediately preceding it than has previously

been recognized. If we look back to 48:20, we find (as in so many other sections of the book) the command for Israel to speak rightly about YHWH:

> Go forth from Babylon, flee from Chaldea,
> declare this with a shout of joy, proclaim it,
> send it forth to the end of the earth;
> say, "The Lord has redeemed his servant Jacob!"

Instead of closing the quote after this one phrase, however, I submit that we are to understand the quote to extend down through 49:3. The first section of this servant passage, then, is part of what the servant Israel is supposed to "declare" and "proclaim," as commanded in 48:20. It is not the servant speaking in the first person after all, but rather YHWH describing what the speech of Israel should be! The book of Isaiah has not yet presented the people of Israel as speaking correctly; there is no indication that the situation has suddenly changed.

There *are* ample instances of YHWH coaxing the community to speak rightly, however, and it is this that we find here. That Israel has not yet claimed its role as servant may be seen in the chapters that follow, where YHWH continues in the role of comforter with a series of "Thus says the Lord ..." statements (49:7, 8, 22, 25; 50:1). Each of these statements functions to assure the broken, dejected, and speechless Israel that YHWH is still actively working on its behalf.

To support our contention that Israel still has not responded to God's urgings, we may cite 49:14, the first time that Israel explicitly speaks:

> But Zion said, "The Lord has forsaken me,
> my Lord has forgotten me."

Here, while Israel does indeed finally engage in speech, we find none of the confidence which the servant of 49:1-3 is portrayed as

having. Instead, we have only a despairing refrain that must have been repeated over and over by the disheartened exilic community. And so it is here that YHWH commissions the prophet to be the new servant.

According to my reading, 49:4 is the voice of the prophet, lamenting that his oracles have had no effect on the people of Israel. That is, they seem no closer than before to engaging YHWH in dialogue. Yet, as the second half of verse 4 indicates, the prophet knows the creative power of YHWH's word. If he has indeed been proclaiming the word of YHWH and not his own whim, then there must be some result.[6]

In 49:5, then, we find the shift in identity posited by Wilcox and Paton-Williams. As Westermann has observed, the poem is constructed so that the "*waw*-consecutive" sets off both verse 4 and verse 5, respectively (1969:207). According to my reading, verse 4 is set off because it is the change in voice from YHWH to the prophet, who wonders over the failure of YHWH's word to fulfill its purpose. Verse 5 is set off because it is the point at which the new identification of the *prophet* as servant is made. This shift also makes sense in terms of the use here of *ʿattâ* ("now"), which is, according to Knight, "Deutero-Isaiah's choice of technical term for the contemporary moment" (1984:120). Because Israel has failed to assume the role of servant and to speak rightly, as called to do in 48:17–49:4, the prophet is "now" given the task of witnessing to "the nations" (49:6) in addition to his previous task of bringing back Israel (49:5-6).

The Third Servant Passage: 50:4-9

Having established that the identity of the servant has shifted from Israel to the prophet, the interpretation of the third servant passage is more straightforward than the others. In terms of the

[6] For a wonderful (albeit somewhat tongue-in-cheek) discussion of how prophetic oracles function as "performative utterances," see Eagleton (1990).

power of speech, the prophet-as-servant is presented as the one who both hears the word of YHWH (verses 4b, 5a), and who speaks rightly about God (verse 4a). In particular we see the contrast with the failure of Israel-as-servant in 50:5:

> The Lord God has opened my ear,
> but I was not rebellious.

Here again we find the *waw*-consecutive, "*but* I was not rebellious." Westermann (1969:229–230) speculates that the *waw* refers back to the implied persecutions of the servant. In my judgment, however, the *waw* refers back to 48:8:

> from of old your ear has not been opened,
> ... from birth you were called a rebel.

The prophet-as-servant, who hears the word of YHWH and is not rebellious, is contrasted with Israel-as-servant, who did not hear the word of YHWH and was rebellious.

In the third servant passage then, the prophet is given as the exemplar for what Israel's role as servant should be. The servant is one who willingly speaks rightly about God and invites others (i.e., the nations) "to contend" (verse 8).

The Fourth Servant Passage: 52:13–53:12

Thus far we have seen a movement in the servant passages from a silent Israel-as-servant in the first passage to the ideal of what Israel *should* be saying in the second passage and to the prophet as exemplar of what Israel should be in the third passage. Now, finally, we come to the silent prophet-as-servant in the fourth passage. But the silence of the prophet in this passage is qualitatively different from the silence of the community in chapter 42. While the silence in chapter 42 was presented as the result

of Israel's inability to hear and respond to YHWH, here the silence of the prophet is presented as obedience in the face of persecution (53:7).[7]

Silence is certainly still understood as a sign of the powerlessness of the servant. However, in an ironic twist, it is this silent servant who will "be exalted" (53:13) "and make many to be accounted righteous" (53:11). In a particularly sardonic reversal we read that "the kings shall shut their mouths because of him" (52:15). The ones who are most powerful and whose speech is most grandiose will themselves become powerless and incapable of speech on account of the servant.

The reversal will not be complete, however, until Israel, the powerless nation, finally speaks. The ultimate goal of the suffering and silent servant is to mobilize the speech of Israel, as shown in the imperative of 54:1:

> Sing, O barren one, who did not bear;
> Break forth into singing and cry aloud,
> you who have not been in travail.

Israel is again called to "fear not ... " (54:4), for "you shall confute every tongue that arises against you in judgment" (54:17). The vicarious silence and suffering of the prophet-as-servant is meant as the final step in convincing Israel to claim its voice.[8] Indeed, within the servant passage itself, we see the beginnings of the return of Israel's speech as the community ruminates on the persecution (and possibly the death) of the servant in 53:1-10.

[7] Dunn writes of the distinction "between the silence of primordial chaos, which is simply confused, and the silence experienced at the end of a Waiting for Godot, which is stark and clear" (1981:102). I find the reference to the silence of "primordial chaos" particularly suggestive for our discussion, since the book of Isaiah draws heavily on creation language. Just as God was able to create out of the "silence of the primordial chaos," so is God now able to create out of the silence of "exilic chaos."

[8] For a consideration of how the suffering and death of an individual can be considered both "despised" (53:3) and "healing" (53:5), see Girard (1977).

THE SERVANT PASSAGES AND THE FINAL FORM OF THE BOOK

We may now turn to the question of what this analysis might contribute to the current conversation on the final form of the book of Isaiah. Our consideration of each of the servant passages has shown that there is a movement from a silent community in the first passage to a community beginning to regain its power for speech in the final passage. I submit that this reflects the larger movement in the book of Isaiah from a community that does not speak or hear in the beginning to a community that engages in covenantal discourse at the end.

We find this larger movement foreshadowed by the royal narratives of chapter 7 and chapters 36–39, in the stories of Ahaz (a king that does not hear or speak) and Hezekiah (a king who engages in covenantal discourse).[9] In Isaiah 7, we find that when Ahaz hears the words "Syria is in league with Ephraim," he and the people become afraid. When the word of the Lord comes to Ahaz (via Isaiah) he will not listen (verses 3-9), and when he is commanded to speak he refuses (verses 11-12). As a result, the narrative ends with a threat concerning the King of Assyria.

In a parallel situation, Hezekiah hears disturbing words from the Rabshekah sent by Sennacherib (36:13-22). Hezekiah responds in the proper mode, however, by addressing God (via Isaiah; cf. 37:1-4) and he is assured that the words of the Rabshekah are no reason to fear. When Hezekiah is threatened again by the words of the Rabshekah (37:8-13), he goes directly to YHWH in a prayer that admonishes YHWH to "hear" (verse 17) and to "save us" (verse 20). As a result of Hezekiah's adherence to the covenantal discourse, the word of YHWH returns against Sennacherib (verses 22-35), thereby sealing his fate. It is significant that the mistake of

[9] Conrad (1991:46-49) also notes this foreshadowing, but his reading of the royal narratives differs in important ways from my own and he gives very little attention to the servant passages.

Sennacherib is presented as "raising your voice ... against the Holy One of Israel" (verse 23) and "mocking the Lord" (verse 24). Sennacherib, having no concept of the covenantal discourse, has no answer to YHWH's question, "Have you not heard that I determined it long ago?" (verse 26). For this reason YHWH says "your arrogance has come to my ears" (verse 29). The final verdict of YHWH concerning Sennacherib is given in 37:33-35 and it is then immediately fulfilled in verses 36-38.

The royal narrative of chapters 36–39 does not end on a wholly positive note, however, as we see in 39:5-8. Here, I submit, Hezekiah fails to speak rightly in response to the word of YHWH in verse 5. Instead of responding with lament at the announcement of the coming exile, Hezekiah selfishly thinks, "there will be peace in my days" (verse 8). By saying that this is "good" Hezekiah becomes, essentially, "one who calls evil good and good evil" (cf. 5:20). The covenantal discourse is broken down; for the people at this point are silent, relying on the speech of the King (see 36:21). With Hezekiah speaking wrongly, Israel fails to fulfill its side of the covenantal discourse.

The book of Isaiah is finally less concerned with Ahaz or Hezekiah, however, than it is with the larger community of Israel. The silence of Ahaz and the wrong speech of Hezekiah serve to accent the importance of the speech of the community. It is for this reason that YHWH coaxes and threatens and allows the prophet to suffer vicariously for Israel. After such a long scroll of silence, Israel finally regains its voice in 63:1, asking the all-important question:

> Who is this that comes from Edom,
> in crimson garments from Borzah,
> he that is glorious in his apparel,
> marching in the greatness of his strength?

YHWH replies:

> It is I, announcing vindication,
> mighty to save.

So begin the final chapters of Isaiah, in which the back and forth dialogue between YHWH and Israel assures us that the covenantal discourse has been restored. It is significant that in these final chapters we find sections of both praise (63:7-14) and lament (63:15–64:12), the two primary poles of speech available to Israel.[10] Even the lament is a welcome sound, for what is important is that the community has regained its voice; the movement of the book is complete.

Our focus on the function of speech in the servant passages has pointed to the connectedness of these passages with the rest of the book of Isaiah, mirroring the movement of the book as a whole from a silent community in the beginning to a community that speaks in the end. Israel's first step toward regaining its power for speech does not happen, of course, until the prophet-as-servant suffers vicariously on behalf of the community, and the prophet is himself made silent. The poignant and paradoxical image of a God who is able to work even through a silent prophet is thus used to show the power of YHWH to speak even the most desolated exilic community back into existence.

[10] See Westermann (1981:18f) for a discussion of praise and lament as modes of speech in Israel. In a recent article (Linafelt 1993), I accept Westermann's basic categories but suggest that "thanksgiving" is perhaps a more appropriate mode of speech in opposition to "lament."

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The Return from the Further Shore:

Theological Implications of Christian *Sannyasa*

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INTRODUCTION

> It was India's privilege and her glory that she pursued her philosophical and spiritual quest for Being to its ultimate depths. In doing so she made man [*sic*] aware of his own deepest center, beyond what in other cultures is termed "mind," "soul," or even "spirit" ... . It was this awareness that gave rise for the first time in the history of the world to the phenomenon of *sannyasa*. (Abhishiktananda 1984a:1)

THE BENEDICTINE PRIEST HENRI LE SAUX CHOSE THE NAME "Abhishiktananda" to symbolize his entry into *sannyasa*, the Hindu life of renunciation.[1] For him, the saffron robe of the *sannyasin* pointed to the transcendence of the world upon the ultimate ground of Being beyond all duality. *Sannyasa* represented

[1] Abhishiktananda means "he who takes joy in the annointed one."

the call to the desert, heard by the early Church fathers but most fully realized in India as the crossing to the further shore.

This vision of a Christian *sannyasa* revealed compelling possibilities for a Catholicism struggling to reconcile itself with Indian culture but also provoked heated criticism as a facile synthesis, unfaithful to both traditions. Many Indian Catholics hailed Abhishiktananda's writings as the beginnings of an authentically Indian Catholicism shed of its Eurocentric strictures.[2] It was Abhishiktananda who gave impetus to Catholic *ashram* movement, which attempts to integrate Indian religious practices into the life of the Church (see Ralston 1987). Yet others, such as the Hindu critic Sita Ram Goel, have branded the very idea of Christian *sannyasa* an oxymoron which does nothing more than ape Hindu tradition (Goel 1988). Within the Catholic hierarchy, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger has criticized such cross cultural adaptations as the products of a negative theology that abandons the triune God in favor of immersion in the indeterminate abyss of divinity.[3]

One need not agree with the extreme critiques of Ratzinger and Goel to recognize the controversial nature of Abhishiktananda's Christian *sannyasa*, for it represents an attempt to merge aspects of two highly divergent traditions. This essay will explore the process and implications of Abhishiktananda's appropriation of *sannyasa*. Turning first to Abhishiktananda's writings, we will examine his concept of renunciation in relation to the Vedantic vision of *sannyasa* developed by the medieval Hindu philosopher Sankara. Although Abhishiktananda would resist any characterization of his work as theological, such a com-

[2] There are many articles discussing the further inculturation of the Catholic Church within Hindu society. See Cornille (1992) for a helpful overview.

[3] For the text of the Razinger letter and impassioned responses by some of Abhishiktananda's disciples, see *The National Catholic Reporter* of May 11, 1990:12-14.

parison reveals that his discussion draws upon a definite religious and metaphysical vision. Within his seemingly exclusive emphasis upon soteriology and practice, we can discern a presentation designed for a Christian audience and a move which challenges Catholicism to reconsider the foundations of its religious life.

We will then consider the implications of Abhishiktananda's approach for interreligious dialogue and comparative theology in conversation with the work of David Tracy and George Lindbeck. Drawing upon Tracy's hermeneutics, I will initially argue that Abhishiktananda's interpretative openness and focus upon metapraxis reveal compelling possibilities for Christian theology. However, in his move to develop a metaphysical framework for his enquiry, Abhishiktananda remains vulnerable to Lindbeck's powerful critique of theories which assume the unity of all religious experience. Finally, I will attempt to reclaim Abhishiktananda's Christian *sannyasa* as a vision which recognizes the need for religion to develop new interpretative methods and strategies of resistance in an increasingly secular world. I will argue that such a project must balance the needs which both Lindbeck and Tracy identify, remaining both responsive to the tradition and sensitive to the new understandings which the plurality of the world demands.

CHRISTIAN *SANNYASA*: ABHISHIKTANANDA'S BRIDGE TO THE FURTHER SHORE

*Hindu Influences: The **Advaita** Vedanta of Sankara*

Abhishiktananda sets forth his vision of renunciation in his essay "*Sannyasa*," written a few months before his death in 1973. He begins by presenting the ideal of *sannyasa* as a practice fundamental to Indian religiosity. Observing that the wise turn inward to find the Self, Abhishiktananda describes *sannyasa* as a "dying to the world" and as the beginning of an "acosmic life" (1984a:2). The surest path to salvation lies in the nonaction of renunciation, in the denial of the religious obligations and social

bonds which enmesh individuals within existence. Abhishiktananda writes that originally *sannyasa* was similar to Christian monasticism—both the *sannyasin* and the monk would depart from society, taking to the roads to live in silence and solitude. While this experience of the wandering life (*parivajya*) remained central to *sannyasa*, initiation soon evolved with the symbolic sacrifice (*yajna*) of the aspirants' possessions, family and position in society. Subsisting upon alms, eating exclusively vegetarian food, and wearing only a minimum of clothing, the *sannyasin* exists in the world as one who does not belong to it. For Abhishiktananda, the true function of the *sannyasin* is "to stand firm in the secret place of the heart," witnessing to the ultimate freedom of every person in a world where society lays an ever increasing claim upon the individual (1984a:10). Indeed, renunciation is a response to Christ's own question, "what does it profit a man [*sic*] to gain the whole world yet loose his soul?" (1984a:2). *Sannyasa* represents the ultimate sacrifice to God, undertaken by those consumed by the heat (*tapas*) of their own inner oblation.

Abhishiktananda uses passages from the Upanishads to describe *sannyasa*. Significantly, he quotes the philosopher Sankara's commentary on the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* to express the fundamental premise of *sannyasa*, i.e. that knowledge of the Self ends all action. Indeed, Abhishiktananda's entire discussion of renunciation seems to draw upon Sankara's system of nondualism (*advaita*) quite extensively in its radical soteriology and advocacy of renunciation. It is this extensive use of Vedantic philosophy that finally allows Abhishiktananda to proclaim a Christian *sannyasa* which, paradoxically, transcends the distinctions of the phenomenal world.

Sankara taught that knowledge (*jnana*) of the universal Self constitutes the true path to salvation (*moksa*; Sawai 1983:372). This realization breaks through the illusion of individual agency, of the nescience that binds humans to the cycle of existence (*sansara*; Sawai 1983:373). Within this framework, *sannyasa*—in

its abandonment of desire, renunciation of worldly things and concern for ultimate knowledge—represents the liberating path of nonaction. Having passed beyond the signs of the phenomenal world (the perceived differences between agent, action and result), the *sannyasin* recognizes the truth of Aruni's admonition to Svetaketu: "that is the Self, that you are" (Potter 1983:115).

Abhishiktananda clearly echoes Sankara's overall vision of renunciation. In addition to accepting the fundamental principle of nonaction, Abhishiktananda divides renunciation into two general types: *vidvat sannyasa*, in which a person is seized by an inner compulsion to renunciation and needs no initiation, and *vivdisa sannyasa*, in which a person takes a vow of renunciation and seeks a teacher (*guru*; Abhishiktananda 1984a:11). This seems not only to reflect the later division within the Indian tradition, but also to build upon Sankara's discussion in the *Bhagavadgitabasya* of the distinction between the *sannyasa* of the knower and that of one eager for salvation. Abhishiktananda's emphasis upon the wandering life also seems to reflect Sankara's preference for *parivajya* as a more specific term than *sannyasa*. For both of them, *sannyasa*, as a reflection of unity in *brahman*, is central to their concern with soteriology and practice.

Abhishiktananda builds upon his ideal conception of *sannyasa* to articulate a radical vision of salvation within a world that allows no compromise in the search for liberation. Arguing against the notion of *sannyasa* as the fourth stage of life (*ashrama*), he states that it is best understood as a fourth kind of consciousness, one which symbolizes a clear break with worldly modes of existence. This resonates with Sankara's argument that the *Chandogya Upanishad* enjoins renunciation as a fourth category, as opposed to a state to be passed through, referring to those "steadfast in *brahman*" (Sankaracarya 1983:773). Yet later, Sankara seems to maintain that dietary regulations still apply and that a *sannyasin* may be excommunicated for the transgression of celibacy (Sankaracarya 1983:787, 799). Sankara, it would seem, wants to limit the radical challenge that renunciation presents to

the social order. Recognizing this tendency, Abhishiktananda states that many discussions of *sannyasa* represent the attempt by Hindu society to win back those who have renounced everything (Abhishiktananda 1984a:17). Abhishiktananda would brook none of Sankara's ambivalence. Arguing that no religion can legislate for its hermits, he maintains that there remains no scripture or theology for the *sannyasin* to study (Abhishiktananda 1984a:10). Even service represents a misguided interpretation of the ideal of renunciation (Abhishiktananda 1984a:15). Instead, Abhishiktananda wishes to emphasize the strict incompatibility of *pravrtti* and *nivrtti*, of action and nonaction. Within a world that provides no middle ground for those seeking salvation, the *sannyasin* turns away from all participation in worldly affairs and lives in solitude, listening only the sacred mantra, om, the very embodiment of all that is real.

This radical perception of action within the world as illusory leads to an equally radical vision of the finitude of religion itself. Abhishiktananda argues that we must resist "the facile syncretism" which treats all religions as essentially the same, since no one can stand outside their own conditioning and pass judgement upon other paths (1984a:25). Beyond all manifestations of name and form (*namarupa*) lies the spirit which can only be reached existentially (Abhishiktananda 1984a:26). Although every religion represents the supreme vehicle of claims for the absolute, *dharma* itself only remains on this side of the real (Abhishiktananda 1984a:25). Thus, terms such as "Hindu *sannyasin*" or "Christian monasticism" should be used with caution because they only have meaning within the phenomenal world. The call to renunciation, however, corresponds to a powerful instinct which is deeply rooted in the human heart and is anterior to every religious experience (Abhishiktananda 1984a:27). The final oblation of Christ has ended all rites and distinctions (Abhishiktananda 1984a:31). Thus, *sannyasa* carries its own abrogation, for any description confines it to the perceived differences of existence.

In Abhishiktananda's vision of nondualism, religion itself becomes part of the finitude of the world. This conception, however, is revealed through specific textual sources—primarily the Upanishads and only secondarily the New Testament. Indeed, Abhishiktananda claims that scripture rests upon its own merit and has no need of justification or recognition by others (1984a:36). Sankara himself based his *advaita* philosophy upon the primacy of Vedic revelation, rejecting the application of human reasoning to the reality to which scripture attests (Halbfass 1983:40). For both Abhishiktananda and Sankara, discussion of the Veda becomes didactic and does not seek to add anything to scripture itself (Halbfass 1983:52). Paradoxically, perhaps, *brahman* is seen as an extratextual reality which is only accessible through texts, texts which exist as part of a particular canon and interpretative scheme. This very movement allows Abhishiktananda to subordinate religion within an overarching conception of Vedanta in which religion's rituals and signs become historically conditioned and transitory.

Though he asserts that *sannyasa* should be free of the confining conceptions of religious doctrine, Abhishiktananda also asserts that it is correct for religious communities to recognize those who have renounced the world. Accordingly, he proposes a Catholic *sannyasa* initiation (*diksa*). Mirroring his own experience on a Hindu pilgrimage with Raimundo Panikkar, Abhishiktananda envisions an initiation marked by the celebration of the Eucharist and the reading of Hindu and Christian texts (Abhishiktananda 1984b). Far from representing entry into another stage of existence within the boundaries of a religious community, this *sannyasa diksa* acknowledges a passing to the further shore, beyond the false distinctions of the phenomenal world. However, it is in this passing that the reality of Christ as the true teacher (*sad-guru*) becomes most apparent. As in his manifestation to the disciples at Emmaus, Christ only becomes known for what he really is when the form he has assumed disappears. Likewise in the Hindu tradition, the teacher becomes fully recognized when the disciple no

longer separates the teacher from his or her own inner mystery (Abhishiktananda 1984a:32). Thus, in passing to the further shore, all distinctions pass away, leaving only the cave of the heart, a cave whose silence attests to the final harmony of existence (Abhishiktananda 1984a:32).

The Christian Subtext: Grammatica and the Stages of Prayer

Although he consistently argues that *advaita* is beyond any proof or justification, Abhishiktananda must make a variety of moves to set his conception of *sannyasa* within an comprehensible framework. In his initial presentation of the ideal of renunciation, he posits a fundamental cross-cultural similarity of religious experience based upon unity with the divine. It is this assumption that allows him to juxtapose texts from the Hindu and Christian traditions. In his juxtaposition of such texts, he views them as testaments to the essential nature of a reality that transcends the strictures of signification and doctrine. Thus, he also avoids questions regarding the uniqueness of Christ and makes religion itself part of the perceived duality of *sansara* (the cycle of existence).

In advocating a Roman Catholic acceptance of *sannyasa*, Abhishiktananda reveals the audience to which his work is directed, as well as the theological nature of his program. Sankara, on the other hand, assumed literate Brahmans—persons educated in the Vedas—as the readers of his texts. As one not eligible for such study, Abhishiktananda suggests that Christianity embodies a similar, albeit implicit, tradition of nonduality and radical renunciation. His essay, therefore, assumes readers familiar with texts of the Christian canon and the monastic tradition.

Although Abhishiktananda himself makes few explicit references to the Catholic tradition in his advocacy of *sannyasa*, the very structure of his presentation reveals his Christian antecedents. Sankara, on the other hand, develops his philosophy of nondualism through a detailed evaluation of Upanishadic injunctions. It is this which establishes the logical necessity of his conclusions. Abhishiktananda, in contrast, weaves together

Upanishadic texts and commentary to express an overall vision of salvific practice. In this sense, Abhishiktananda is more Benedictine than Vedantic.

Abhishiktananda's practice reminds one of the early monastic schools and the attempt to place the monk immediately in contact with Scripture (Le Clerq 1982:17-18). This practice, the Christian *grammatica*, constituted an integral part of the monastic life of prayer—to meditate in this manner was to read a text and its commentary, to learn it by heart and to embody it in practice. Abhishiktananda's evident reluctance to embark upon systematic argument reflects the similarly contemplative nature of his own writings. In this sense, his writings constitute a *grammatica* of *sannyasa*. Their primary purpose, *quare deum*, is revealed through the mingling of Christian and Hindu texts and expresses the primacy of the Universal Self in the quest for salvation.

Strangely, perhaps, Abhishiktananda outlines this path to salvation in a manner which is much closer to Christian understandings of the process of prayer than to Vedantic conceptions of personal liberation. In most traditional Indian philosophical discourse, discussion proceeds from questions posed by a disciple to answers provided by a *guru*. In this way, a preliminary thesis is transformed through debate into a final conclusion which excludes other possible alternatives. With Abhishiktananda, however, we can discern an exposition of three stages of contemplative prayer that corresponds to certain Christian conceptions of the path to union with God. Like the *metanoia* argued by Evagrius as fundamental to the life of contemplation, Abhishiktananda advocates a radical conversion and openness to the texts of the Hindu tradition (Ware 1987:397). Not only does this represent a reorientation of an individual's life toward God, as *metanoia* traditionally demands, but it also necessitates a turning away from specifically Eurocentric conceptions of religious truth and practice. A second stage, corresponding to the natural contemplation of *physike*, involves the study of the Upanishads

and the recognition of the nonduality underlying all existence (Ware 1987:398). For both Abhishiktananda and Evagrius, the second stage of contemplation means seeing the God who is in all things and yet beyond them. The final stage, *theoria*, culminates in an unmediated union with God (Ware 1987:399). While Evagrius understands this as an immersion in the God that is love, Abhishiktananda views this stage as passing to the further shore—i.e., passing beyond the perceived dualities of existence. This fundamental difference notwithstanding, what Abhishiktananda presents is a discussion of *sannyasa* which conforms to traditional Christian expositions of the nature of prayer. While the content of his writings draw almost exclusively upon Hindu sources, their mode of exposition relies upon well-established forms of monastic rhetoric. Indeed, he can do nothing else; his writings must be comprehensible to the Christian audience he assumes.

The Poor Logic of Practice

Within this amalgam of Christian and Hindu discourse, it becomes apparent that Abhishiktananda is seeking to merge two distinct cultural visions into an overarching conception of the primacy of renunciation as practice. In order to understand this process, we may turn to Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu describes the regulative structures of society as *habitus*: dispositions which regulate without being seen as the product of genuine strategic intention (Bourdieu 1977:81-82). *Habitus* refers to the "structuring structures" which circumscribe our decisions within a particular social and cultural context. It defines the possible and impossible, encouraging the use of a "poor" and "economical" logic which allows practical coherence within a symbolic system. With this conception of how individuals adapt and function within their *habitus*, what remains unsaid in society's transactions becomes crucial. It is in this silence of the unsaid that we can identify the assumptions upon which a particular discourse rests.

Bourdieu's observations provide a useful framework for understanding Abhishiktananda's endeavor. What is unsaid in

Abhishiktananda's writings, namely his orientation to his Christian audience, is as important as his explication of *advaita*. It is his attempt to reconcile, or merge, the Catholic *habitus* with that of nondualistic Hinduism that orders his work. Vedantic theories are presented nearly monolithically, with no reference to the furious debates which generated them. Christian forms of renunciation are then related to the philosophy of *advaita* in rudimentary fashion. What emerges is a work that seems to mirror Abhishiktananda's own experience in attempting, as a Catholic Benedictine, to come to terms with an overarching Hindu culture. There is no systematic explanation of the similarities between the Christian and Vedantic traditions, nor any initial effort to justify the comparative reading of texts from different religious canons. Instead, the comparisons advanced possess a rather poor logic, one which aims at providing a strategy for pursuing renunciation within a context shaped by different cultural traditions. Indeed, Abhishiktananda's concern with practice is exclusive, and his entire essay may perhaps be best understood as a kind of manual for *sannyasa*. However, as Bourdieu observes, varying forms of *habitus* may conflict because of differing modes of generation (Bourdieu 1977:78). Accordingly, Abhishiktananda can only position Christian and Hindu renunciation together by positing the search for the divine, the-One-without-a-second, as the single mode of generation for both paths.

With its exclusive emphasis upon practice and evident lack of systematic inquiry, one might wonder whether Abhishiktananda's work is theological at all. His theological intentions, however, become especially clear in his work *Saccinanda: A Christian Approach to the Advaitic Experience*. While his essay "*Sannyasa*" does strongly suggest nondualism as the framework for Christian theology, *Saccinanda* confirms Abhishiktananda's final interpretative move as the construction of an *advaitic* metaphysics. Through this maneuver, he can interpret all religion and religious experience as different manifestations of the encounter with, or realization of, the unity of existence understood as *brahman*.

In this way, Abhishiktananda pushes Catholicism to consider a profound shift in practice and theological method. By attempting to establish a practical bridge between Catholic monasticism and Hindu renunciation—an effort which mirrors his discussion of a bridge to the further shore—Abhishiktananda challenges Christian thought to embrace not only different religious canons but also different visions of the divine. His use of Vedanta is particularly well chosen, precisely because it circumvents questions concerning the worship of other deities or acceptance of specific doctrinal formulations. Moving from his own community into a world shaped by Upanishadic texts and commentary, Abhishiktananda returns to his own tradition after having appropriated a specific form of religious practice. By extending his initial reflections upon *sannyasa* to an *advaitic* metaphysics, he raises his enquiry to an abstract level of discourse. His work becomes theological as it seeks to expand the horizon of meaning for a particular religious community by changing the practical and conceptual ground upon which that community is based. Yet, as Bourdieu observes, conceptions of orthodoxy and heresy arise in a situation of competing possibilities that divides the field of *doxa* (Bourdieu 1977:169). Thus, with this different vision of what is possible for Catholicism, Abhishiktananda calls us to consider how Catholicism might respond to the challenges of modern pluralism.

THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS: INTERPRETIVE OPENNESS AND RESISTANCE

Realizing the radical nature of his vision, Abhishiktananda once cautioned his disciples not take his writings as anything more than suggestions. In spite of this disclaimer, Abhishiktananda's writings themselves have led to a fundamental reorientation of the attitudes of Indian Catholics toward the surrounding culture. In order to understand the implications of this reorientation for a wider theological discussion, we must, as it were, re-present his reflections in order to determine how they might function as a basis for

interreligious dialogue. Accordingly, we will begin this discussion with an examination of Abhishiktananda's process of interpretation as it relates to the hermeneutical method of David Tracy.

The Game of Interpretation

David Tracy, in his discussion of the nature of the religious classic, identifies a "claim to attention" which immediately strikes a reader (Tracy 1991:62). While Abhishiktananda continually emphasizes the experiential basis of his reflections, the primacy which Hindu texts assume in his reflections is most compelling. Whether it be the Upanishads or the extended commentaries of Sankara, Abhishiktananda views the written corpus of *advaitic* philosophy as disclosing an authentic reality which demands response. In this sense, for Abhishiktananda, the reading of the Upanishads possesses the character of an event which issues not from his own personal subjectivity but from outside, as a challenge his interpretative predispositions (Tracy 1981:198). Confronted with the choice to impose, in Tracy's words, "standards of technical rationality" or to give himself over to a wholly different claim of rationality, Abhishiktananda chooses the latter. He presents us with elements from the texts themselves in order to articulate the reality which they manifest (Tracy 1981:195). Reading his reflections, we can sense an initial hermeneutic move in which the subject matter, revealed in classic texts, takes over the discussion. We are drawn into a world in which salvation becomes the central issue and realization of the unity of existence the means by which it is achieved.

In allowing the subject matter to assume primacy, Abhishiktananda gives himself over to "the game" of interpretation. Hans Georg Gadamer describes this process as the to-and-fro movement of contending with any work of art. It is a play of utter seriousness in which the players loose themselves in the game (Gadamer 1991:102). Within this framework, we can perhaps understand Abhishiktananda's interpretative openness as a play in which he is the one who is being played—played by the texts of

the Hindu tradition and the religious practices they affirm. Thus, when he states that his reflections are "suggestions," he acknowledges their provisional, yet deeply serious, nature. By accepting the initial postulate that the Upanishads and their commentaries reveal a truth which stands alongside that of the Bible, he begins a backward-and-forward conversation between the classics of his own Christian tradition and those of the form of Hinduism he has chosen to enter. In this sense, we can understand his lack of systematic presentation as reflective of the fluid character of this interpretative process. Yet, as Gadamer reminds us, play is also re-presentation for a particular audience (Gadamer 1991:109). Thus, we can understand Abhishiktananda's clearly Christian rhetoric as the form of representation which his theological interpretation assumes, a form which is necessary if his audience is to appreciate and understand the play. Abhishiktananda's play, as does all real play, takes place "in between": in between the Hindu and Catholic traditions and in between his audience and the subject matter which has possessed him. As readers, we ourselves become participants in this game of interpretation and are forced to yield, at least for a moment, our all-too-comfortable relationship with the texts and practices of our own tradition.

What emerges in Abhishiktananda's writings is a sense of genuine conversation with the texts of the Hindu tradition. As Gadamer observes, true conversation is never one we "wanted to conduct"; rather, it is something into which we fall (Gadamer 1991:383). With Abhishiktananda, there remains a profound sense of rapture and absorption within an entirely other tradition. As we see him allows his subject matter to overtake his writings, we gain a sense of how the possibility of radical renunciation overtook him, as it were, in a manner much more akin to conversion than to a purposeful appropriation of a religious practice. Because of this, we gain an impression of a conversation which involves understanding. Abhishiktananda writes with the imagery and language of the texts he has read and the Hindu/Christian *habitus* which shapes him. The risk of interpretation which

Abhishiktananda has undertaken is the challenge to give oneself over to the questions of the dialogue. Thus, his vision of a Christian *sannyasa* embodies the new possibilities which arise from the serious play of interpretation.

Metapraxis

While the preceding discussion of Abhishiktananda in relation to Tracy and Gadamer allows us to characterize Abhishiktananda's overall interpretative approach, it does not provide us with a meaningful appropriation of the more substantive matters. Above all, Abhishiktananda advocates a specific practice, *sannyasa*'s radical renunciation. It is, perhaps, with his emphasis on this practice that he makes his greatest contribution to interreligious dialogue.

Thomas Kasulis defines metapraxis as "the development of a philosophical theory about the nature of a particular praxis" (1992:74). Accordingly, we may understand Abhishiktananda's essay "*Sannyasa*" as preeminently a discourse on the essence of radical renunciation and its justification. He anchors this metapraxis within the experience of a particular community, namely that of *advaitic* Hinduism. In so doing, he initially avoids the abstractions which plague many pluralist attempts to justify interpenetration among religious traditions. With the reading of "*Sannyaṣa*", we immediately become involved in a discussion of the efficacy of a certain religious practice. As Kasulis remarks, once we focus upon issues of metapraxis, we can deal more directly with the concrete phenomena of religious life itself and less with rarefied metaphysics. What Abhishiktananda begins to show us in his consideration of *sannyasa* is a method which has the lived experience of members of the Hindu tradition as its referent. While he does not address the problematic history of Christianity on the Indian subcontinent, he does allow us to understand how two traditions may each enrich the religious practices of the other through an interpretive openness which has salvation as its primary concern. In this way, he brings reflection

upon interreligious dialogue down from its lofty heights and sets it upon the more immediate ground of the actions and experiences which constitute the religious life.

The Perils of Metaphysics

Kasulis states that religious praxis demands two reflective responses: metapraxis and metaphysics (1992:185). It is not surprising, then, that Abhishiktananda's discussion of *sannyasa* as praxis develops into a full blown *advaitic* metaphysics—a metaphysics in which religion becomes part of the finitude of the world. While a metaphysical move is necessary for Abhishiktananda's establishing of the relevance of renunciation, his appropriation of *advaita vedanta* as a philosophical justification becomes highly problematic within the Christian framework which he assumes. Fundamental to this use of *advaita* is the argument that religion proceeds from the same longing for the divine—which is, according to Abhishiktananda, anterior to every religious experience. By assuming such an experiential similarity, Abhishiktananda not only positions Hindu and Christian texts together but also argues that differing religious traditions possess complementary revelatory significance and congruent religious paths. Thus, we can understand Christianity and nondualist Hinduism as striving for the same unity with the divine which characterizes the orientation of all religion and, indeed, human experience itself. It is here that the problems begin.

George Lindbeck, author of *The Nature of Doctrine*, would define Abhishiktananda's approach as an "experiential-expressive" model, one which posits that different religious traditions are objectifications of a common core experience (1984:32). As a substitute for this approach, Lindbeck draws upon current anthropological theory to propose a cultural-linguistic model—one which views religion as similar "to an idiom that makes possible the description of realities, the formulation of beliefs, and the experiencing of inner attitudes, feelings and sentiments" (1984:33). Clearly echoing Wittgenstein, Lindbeck would have us

focus upon the immanent meaning embodied in religious practices and texts. Religion, like language and culture, shapes individuals rather than being exclusively shaped by them.

Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic framework allows us to see the difficulties Abhishiktananda encounters in his efforts to provide a metaphysical superstructure for his reflections upon *sannyasa*. By Abhishiktananda's own admission, the difficulties faced by Christianity in India stem from the fact that a different language is used when speaking of the divine. Institutional structures, doctrines affirming the exclusivity of Catholic dogma and ritual practices lack the necessary roots in Indian soil. The very history of the Church after the rise of Portuguese rule attests to this fact, a legacy continually emphasized by demonstrations against Christianity as a colonial power.[4] Thus, the marginality faced by Christians within certain levels of Indian society represents, in the language of Peter Berger, a rift in "the sacred canopy of Indian Catholicism" rather than a failure to recognize the fundamental truth of *advaita* (Berger 1969:29-51). As Abhishiktananda's work attests, *sannyasa* itself exists upon a ground which is given definition by Upanishadic texts and has meaning within a specific cultural context. Lindbeck observes that religious innovation can best be understood as the interaction of a cultural-linguistic system with changing conditions (1984:47). Thus, the personal experiences of Abhishiktananda reflect how his conceptions of renunciation and religion were challenged by the texts and practices of the Hindu tradition. Indeed, the power of his work derives from his re-presentation of this challenge to his audience. However, to argue that, in fact, the experience from which Hindu renunciation proceeds is fundamentally similar to that embodied in Christian scripture is to ignore the role which texts play in shaping that reality.

Lindbeck relates his cultural-linguistic model to the question of truth claims by stating that different religions may be compared

[4] See Niell (1984) and Srivastav (1986).

"in terms of their propositional truth, their symbolic efficacy, or their categorical adequacy" (1984:47). Though he argues for categorical adequacy as the most economical and consistent approach, he observes that experiential-expressivist methods for evaluating truth claims function as an evaluation of symbolic efficacy. Thus, all religions may be "true" in a nondiscursive sense but nevertheless differ in how well they express the fundamental experience of the divine. This approach is especially apparent in Abhishiktananda's discussions of a wide variety of texts and their complementary visions of nonduality. This leads him to rather vague and impressionistic formulations—such as his conception of a Christian *sannyasa* initiation in which the inclusion of the Eucharist seems but an incongruous intrusion within a truly different religious rite. Abhishiktananda resists characterizing India as the eternal feminine, a vision which many of his contemporaries hold. However, he does abstract an insight gained from a particular branch of the Hindu tradition and transforms it into the essence not only of Indian culture but of religious experience itself.

Paradoxically, in trying to circumvent questions concerning the objective, propositional truth of religious traditions, Abhishiktananda brings truth claims immediately to the fore and limits the applicability of his work. As the theologian Fergus Kerr has observed, discussions about the nature of the deity often come too soon or too late to be of help to anyone (1986:155). With Abhishiktananda they come too soon. By making such a leap from the metapraxis of renunciation to a metaphysics based upon an *advaitic* conception of reality, Abhishiktananda immediately elicits the response of traditionalists such as Ratzinger. This draws the focus away from the value of particular religious practices in certain cultural contexts toward a more abstract debate upon differing conceptions of divinity. In Lindbeck's framework, truth, at least initially, becomes a function of categorical adequacy. Doctrine, on the other hand, exists as a second order discourse about the uses of religious language (1984:115). While

Abhishiktananda seems to recognize this distinction in the economical logic of his discourse, his initial efforts at comparison become submerged under the oppressive weight of his nondualist metaphysics. His work thus fails to return to the initial question, that of Christian *sannyasa*, which he himself introduced.

In discusing the implications of cultural-linguistic and experiential-expressive models, Lindbeck argues that they lead respectively to intra- and extratextual approaches to theological discourse. Abhishiktananda himself, in his final metaphysical move, posits an extratextual referent for the interpretation of scripture, reinterpreting a wide variety of texts to reveal their complementary visions of the divine. While he initially places Christian and Hindu texts in dialogue with each other, he finally totalizes the insight gained from the Upanishads and Sankara's commentaries and subsumes a variety of Christian sources within this nondualist framework. Significantly absent is any consideration of the divergent social and religious systems which these texts shape. Although we learn much about the practice of *sannyasa*, we are given no introduction to the diversity of Hindu or, for that matter, Christian religiosity. An intratextual approach, however, would have Abhishiktananda turn to the texts of the Catholic tradition and explicate their meaning within a specific cultural context. This movement would posit an immanent meaning within religious texts, a meaning which speaks to how life should be lived. This becomes especially relevant in the discussion of *sannyasa*, for *sannyasa* assumes great soteriological significance in Abhishiktananda's work. What is necessary, then, is a more explicit consideration of how this path of liberation may expand Catholicism's intratextual understanding of its own religious practices. While Abhishiktananda partially attempts this approach, he refuses to return to the specific cultural concerns which introduced his work. He makes no mention of how the Church's position within India might change both culturally and politically through the adoption of renunciation and other indigenous practices. Further, he fails to discuss aspects of the Catholic tradition which

initially legitimated the very process of inculturation. While Lindbeck's call to reflect upon doctrine as encoded in scripture may seem too rigid for cross cultural discussion, it remains an admonition to be heeded if Catholicism is to seek to understand itself within a different cultural context.

Lindbeck is useful for establishing a general framework for understanding religion and accentuating the need for a community to develop normative standards of belief and practice. He allows us to see how Abhishiktananda's theological project requires a dual movement, one which initially considers the meaning embodied within religious language and practice but also reflects back upon the Catholic tradition itself. While Lindbeck's powerful critique of contemporary theological discourse reveals the perils of pluralism, it is, by itself, insufficient to encompass all of the issues that Abhishiktananda elicits in his advocacy of *sannyasa*. Indeed, when pushed to the extreme, Lindbeck's assumptions tend toward a relativism and a neo-Barthian confessionalism which could hinder interreligious dialogue. Abhishiktananda's writings reveal the fact that Indians in general, and Indian Catholics in particular, live within an intertextual culture. Within this context, both the Upanishads and the Bible are part of a dynamic, interactive religious ferment which shapes the lives of individuals. Lindbeck's conception of religion as a cultural-linguistic system, in contrast, emphasizes the mutual unintelligibility of different religious traditions which, in his view, possess untranslatable grammars of belief and practice. In order to maintain this position, Lindbeck finds it necessary to embrace an essentialism, to posit a fundamental core of religious tradition which resists change.

However, when we view the history of Catholicism in India, what becomes apparent is continual mutation and change rather than complete unintelligibility. During certain periods in South India, Christianity has been accepted by and integrated within the overarching culture. In the North, however, it continues to maintain a rather tenuous and often troubled relationship with the surrounding society. Far from proving mutual incomprehensibility,

this demonstrates the plurality of different religious languages within a cultural context which merge and separate overtime. To admit the plurality of religious belief and practice within Indian society would not deny the applicability of cultural-linguistic models or the importance of intratextual understanding. It would, however, expand the parameters of Lindbeck's approach and accept the possibility of mutual enrichment among religious groups through the process of translation. Lindbeck's insights reveal the inadequacies of Abhishiktananda's metaphysical leap to justify Christian *sannyasa*. However, it is pluralism as a distinguishing characteristic of modern culture that establishes the final relevance of his approach to the dilemmas of Catholicism and the necessity of a cross-cultural understanding.

Pluralism and Resistance

For Abhishiktananda, the difficulties of the modern world require a new openness to diversity and an acceptance of the often vague and tenuous character of truth. David Tracy speaks of these challenges in *Plurality and Ambiguity*, and his words serve as an appropriate introduction to the questions which Christian *sannyasa* calls us to consider.

> All of us know we have been formed by traditions whose power impinges upon us both consciously and preconsciously. We begin to glimpse the profound plurality and ambiguity of our own traditions. As Westerns we have also become conscious of those other traditions whose power we sense, but whose meaning we do not yet begin to know how to interpret. We find ourselves impelled by the same kind of hermeneutic urgency as Augustine in late classical antiquity or Schleiermacher and Hegel in early modernity. Like them, we need to find ways of interpreting ourselves and our traditions. Like them, we may even find ourselves compelled to reflect on the very process of understanding as interpretation. (Tracy 1987:8)

In Abhishiktananda's discussion of *sannyasa*, we can sense the initial outlines of an approach that attempts to respond to the plurality and ambiguity of the world. He radically shifts traditional Christian interpretative strategies by focusing upon the texts of another tradition as the lens through which to view our own. By doing this, he so destabilizes traditional Catholic approaches to understanding different religions that we are required to reconsider what we mean when we speak of Christianity and, indeed, what we mean when we speak of truth. His choice of the Upanishads and Sankara's commentary upon them as levers for this movement is particularly powerful because of the central position of texts within a tradition's vision of itself. Tracy argues that to interpret the religious classics is not only to allow them to challenge what we consider possible but also to challenge them through every interpretive device available. This process becomes central to Abhishiktananda's discussion of *sannyasa*, for he establishes a dialogue between the classics of two traditions and allows this conversation to develop into a reciprocal interpretation of both canons. While we may disagree with Abhishiktananda's move to subsume all religious experience within a single explanatory framework, he nonetheless forces us to consider texts and wrestle with our resistance to their readings.

For Tracy, the interpretative openness which religions must embrace in order to understand remains linked to the strategies of resistance they must develop in order to act (1987:114). For Abhishiktananda, renunciation itself becomes a strategy of resistance—not only denying the pretense of culturally bound forms of religious practice, but standing firm against exclusively secular visions of reality. Moreover, it is a call that resonates with the role of *sannyasa* within Hinduism itself, for renunciation has been a religious path through which individuals gain power in their marginality and present a powerful challenge to the pervasive social and religious hierarchy.[5] By focusing upon the question of

[5] For an explication of this relationship, see Dumont (1980).

salvation and the primacy of religious practice, Abhishiktananda initially directs interreligious dialogue toward issues which directly affect the way individuals lead their lives. In attempting to bridge chasms between cultures, he affirms the need for a theology which remains open to possibilities of both similarity and difference. Christian *sannyasa* calls Catholicism to realize fully its Catholicity (by transcending the very category Catholic). It calls Catholicism to move toward an encounter with the divine, an encounter beyond the limitations which humans continue to impose upon themselves and, inevitably, upon God.

CONCLUSION

Lindbeck and Tracy allow us to see the difficult issues which Abhishiktananda summons along with his call for a Christian *sannyasa* and to reflect upon their implications for theological discourse. Perhaps Abhishiktananda's work can be most appropriately described as a synthetic theology which attempts to merge aspects of a variety of religious traditions. In order to become comparative, and thus more critical, such an endeavor requires a movement which begins with forms reflected in religious language and practice. While simultaneously remaining open to the variety of strategies such an interpretation requires, there must be a reciprocal return to, in this case, the Catholic tradition to explicate the meaning of the comparison in relation to issues of doctrine and praxis. Inevitably, this is an ongoing process which demands continual questioning and revision. As we have seen, Abhishiktananda is only partially successful in his advocacy of the meeting of East and West which Christian *sannyasa* exemplifies. His beginning presents much promise in its discussion of *sannyasa* as practice. However, in his concern to demonstrate the mutual compatibility of different religious traditions, he enervates the power which Christian *sannyasa* might hold for an Indian Church which has yet to come to terms with its surrounding culture. What has brought Hinduism and Christianity together is history, and any project which seeks a meaningful

encounter between the two must address its historical context. Christian *sannyasa*, or any other cross-cultural theological enterprise, must balance the needs identified by Tracy and Lindbeck. A tradition must be concerned with issues of intratextuality without falling into relativistic isolation. It must also accept the reality of a pluralistic world but avoid an uncritical acceptance of difference. To do less is to relegate interreligious dialogue and comparative theology to a position where they have relevance only as curious intellectual pursuits and are no longer incisive critiques of religious thought and practice.

Christian *sannyasa* as a strategy of resistance is perhaps the most powerful image that Abhishiktananda evokes. It is a vision which is meaningful for comparative theology and interreligious dialogue. Christian theology has rarely turned its gaze from the specific concerns of the West toward the diversity of the world. Comparative theology, within the realm of religious discourse, offers the possibility that this focus may broaden and expand the horizon of meaning for Christianity as a whole. Within the academy, such a project resists the specialization which has limited communication between disciplines such as theology, anthropology and history of religions. However, in pursuing such questions we must resist the temptation to say either that all is the same or that all is irreconcilably different. Perhaps Abhishiktananda and his disciples, if they wish to remain within the boundaries of the Catholic tradition, can never fully justify merging a Christian rationality linked to the historical incarnation of the Christ with a metaphysic which argues that such a concern is illusory. However, if we can retrieve the tradition of the Desert Fathers by engaging the Hindu tradition of renunciation, then we will have rediscovered something important about our own identity in our encounter with difference. The value of Christian *sannyasa* and comparative theology itself will be judged upon such a return from the further shore—judged by their ability to enable others to make the journey and to give meaning to those who must inevitably remain behind.

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The Water of Life in an Indian Cup: Towards a Contextual Theology

CHANDRA SHEKAR SOANS

INTRODUCTION

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY WAS UNDOUBTEDLY A EUROPEAN century. In this period of European supremacy, India, along with other Asian and African countries, was strenuously subordinated. Along with economic and political subordination, the Indian efforts to develop Christian theology have also been subordinated. The Christianity that came to India with Western colonialism provided no room for the development of an authentic Indian Christian theology. This Western Christianity was a finished product, nicely packed with layers of wrappers for presentation. Deep inside the package lay the "raw fact of Christ,"[1] the Christ event which appeared in and through the life and ministry of Jesus Christ in Palestine 2000 years ago.

In India, from the beginning of the arrival of Western Christianity, there was an ongoing effort to free the Christian message from its previous cultural and political accretions and to allow it to stand freely for translation into the new situation.

[1] This term was first adopted by Chenchiah, a prominent Indian theologian.

Today, in the postcolonial period, it is the task of the Indian theologian to interpret and proclaim his or her understanding and experience of the Christian faith in such a way that others may come to the same knowledge. The work of every Christian theologian should achieve two purposes. First, the theologian, if Christian, should remain faithful to his or her own experience and knowledge of Christ who is the center of life. Second, the theologian's work must pave the way for people to understand the message of Christ without impediments. Therefore, it is the theologian's task to remove all hinderance to the effective communication and full reception of the Gospel of Christ.

During the colonial period, Indian Christians and non-Christian leaders reacted to the Western church's negative attitude toward the promotion and development of contextual theology. Persons like Bishop A. J. Appasamy repudiated the Western notion that Indians must yield to Greek philosophy and must accept the Gospel package as it was brought to India by the Western missionaries. Therefore, he urged the use of Indian thought forms to communicate the Christian gospel to India.

> We readily acknowledge the uniqueness of Jesus and bow humbly and willingly before Him, but when we are told that we must learn from Plato before we can learn effectively what Jesus taught we hesitate and wonder. (1928:480)

In his recent book, *Must God Remain Greek?*, Robert E. Hood identifies three types of Christian groups: the "homies," the "adopted homies," and the "homeless." Hood used the term "homies" to refer to those European Christians who are at home with concepts of God that have their roots in Graeco-Roman culture. The second group, the "adopted homies," are New World offspring of the "homies." They should more appropriately be described as Euro-Americans because of their cultural and intellectual roots in Europe. The third group, the "homeless," are

those whose cultures have not been shaped or greatly influenced by Graeco-Roman concepts and cultures via European or Euro-American cultures and their attendant religion (1990:1–2).

According to Hood, Indian Christianity comes under the third group, the "homeless," because India's culture has not been shaped or greatly influenced by Graeco-Roman concepts and culture. Though India has its own ancient heritage and culture, Indian Christianity is viewed from within the hegemony of Western culture and that culture's domination of the Christian theological tradition. Therefore, Indian Christianity is "homeless" (1990:2). The question before Indian theologians is how long Christianity will be able to live in India in a "homeless" situation. Sooner or later it must find its home in India. Therefore, the need for a contextual theology, a theology which has the ability to speak the language of the people, is urgent.

The effort of Appasamy and other Indian theologians was to plant the Christian gospel in Indian soil with an authentically Indian Christian theology. In this connection, we must go further and ask what is contextual in the Indian situation? The dominant models of contextual theology that have so far been presented fall either into the categories of "ethnographic approaches" or "liberation approaches." The ethnographic approaches are concerned with identity, while the liberation approaches are concerned particularly with social change. Neither of these approaches is adequate to deal with Indian situation, so this paper will attempt a different approach.

This paper explores the combination of *bhakti* with mysticism—a combination which expresses a dominant religious experience in India—as a way of translating the Christian message into a language that is understandable at the popular level. The purpose of the paper is not to advance Indian identity or to create social change, but to "present the water of life in an Indian cup"—to find an indigenous permanence, a home, for the Indian church in India. In India there is a widespread dislike among both Hindus and Christians for anything "dogmatic." Inclination is

always towards "experience" or *anubhava*. In this context, the study of *bhakti* in association with mysticism is not only contextual but also authentically Indian.

India is often called the School of mysticism, because in popular Hinduism roughly two-thirds of the population follow the way of *bhakti*. Mysticism and *bhakti marga* (the way of devotion) are two sides of the same coin; they are inseparable. Therefore, any theology that claims to be authentically Indian must take the *bhakti* aspect of Indian life seriously. The approach of the paper is practical, not theoretical. Therefore, in keeping with the limited scope of this paper, I will concentrate on one individual, Sadhu Sunder Singh, a prominent Christian mystic and *bhakti* theologian who sincerely made efforts to present water of life in an Indian cup.

BHAKTI MARGA—THE WAY OF DEVOTION

Christ-Centered Mysticism

Sadhu Sunder Singh was born to wealthy parents on September 3, 1889, at Rampur, in the state of Patiala in North India (Streeter 1921:4). Though his parents belonged to the Sikh religion, his mother introduced him to religious texts like the Bhagavad Gita and put him in touch with a *sadhu* (Holy Man or Sage-Saint) who lived in a jungle near Rampur. Her prayer was that her youngest son, Sunder, should become a *sadhu*. She put the idea into his mind when he was still very young. She died when Sunder was hardly fourteen (Francis 1989:1). He had a great admiration for his mother and once said that "The mother's bosom is the best theological college in the world" (Streeter 1921:5). While speaking to the Archbishop of Canterbury, he said: "If I do not see my mother in heaven, I shall ask God to send me to hell so that I may be with her" (Streeter 1921:5). Because of his mother's lasting influence, he became a seeker of truth from an early age. By age sixteen, he had read the Granth of the Sikhs, the Islamic Koran, and a number of the Hindu

Upanishads. Though he made remarkable progress in the study of these sacred scriptures, none of these satisfied his spiritual hunger. When he asked his spiritual *gurus* how best he could get the peace for which his soul longed, they tried to put him off by saying that when he grew older he would understand these things better. But he insisted, "How can you ask a boy who is hungry to wait for bread until he grows up? He needs bread immediately to satisfy his hunger" (Appasamy 1956:8). With regard to Christianity, his earliest attitude was that of resentment. It is reported that once in the presence of his father he cut up the Bible and other Christian books, put kerosene oil on them and burned them (Appasamy 1956:6).

In his continued effort to seek peace, he once prayed in his room, "O God, if there be a God, reveal yourself to me tonight." He planned to put an end to his life if God did not respond to his prayer by daybreak. The God who responded to his prayer and appeared to him in a vision was Jesus Christ with his loving face. He heard Christ speaking to him in Hindustani. This happened on December 18, 1904, and from that moment his life was changed. "Having committed his life to Christ, Sunder chose the path of the Cross and decided to bear the Cross at all cost" (Francis 1989a:2–3). Therefore, Dr. T. Dayanandan Francis appropriately titled his book *Sadhu Sunder Singh: The Lover of the Cross.*

After his conversion, Sadhu Sunder Singh committed his life to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ in the Indian subcontinent. The method he adopted to present Christ was the Hindu popular way of religion, "the *bhakti marga*," associated with mysticism. He adopted the ascetic lifestyle in imitation of Christ, but in the style of a Hindu *sadhu*—i.e., an asceticism grounded in the world. He moved from place to place in possession of nothing but his robe, his blanket, and a copy of the New Testament; and he lived on food offered him by listeners. When food was not offered, he lived on roots and leaves; and when hospitality was not offered, he slept in caves or under trees.

Within the person of Sadhu, two principle elements of Indian Christian theology, "mysticism and *bhakti*," were combined instinctively and intrinsically. Even though, in the final analysis, *bhakti* and mystic experience cannot be separated one from the other, it is necessary to understand the meaning and the significance of these two before we study Sadhu's distinctive contribution to Christian theology.

Mysticism

Even though India is often called the land of mystics, mysticism itself is a universal phenomenon. For example, the Hebrew scriptures—whether read as the Jewish Tanak or the Christian Old Testament—can be understood, at least in part, as mystical books. Certain great biblical figures—e.g., Abraham, Jacob, and especially Moses—are treated as paradigmatic mystics whose experiences and life histories became the models through which others sought to achieve contact with God. In this connection, the books of Psalms and the Song of Songs may be treated as collections of spiritual or mystical experiences of the soul's journey to God.

The same is true of the New Testament. Paul's conversion experience (Acts 9:1-9) and the passages concerning the union between Christ and the believer in the Gospel of John mark the beginning of Christian mysticism. In the case of Western Christian mysticism, scholars also trace roots to Greek philosophy, especially Platonism, and to Greek mystical contemplation—e.g., Plato's "description of the soul's return to God through purification (*askesis*) followed by contemplative vision (*theoria*)" (McGinn 1991:24).

The followers of Christ in the first centuries after his death showed considerable skill in blending mystical elements from their reading of the Old and New Testaments—as well as Hellenistic religion and philosophy—with their belief in the divinity manifested in Jesus, now the risen and ascended Christ. These early efforts are briefly summarized in the following words:

> The presence of God which Jewish apocalypticists and early mystics realized in their ascents to the divine realm and which Platonists sought through a flight to the contemplation of ultimate reality, Christians insisted could be attained only through the risen Lord, the true *theophania theou* ... .The divine presence experienced in Jesus was accessible through the community and its sacramental rituals, particularly in baptism as foundation and Eucharist as crown. It was to be consummated, if necessary through public witness to Christ as God in the act of martyrdom. (McGinn 1991:6)

The major influence of the Platonic tradition on the history of Christian mysticism cannot be denied. The meaning of mysticism for Western traditions can be explained in Plato's words:

> The lover's love for beautiful things is essentially a desire for the happiness (*eudaimonia*) that comes from the permanent possession of the true Beauty, which is identical with the Good. (McGinn 1991:26)

Such possession cannot be perfect if it comes to an end, and therefore, love involves a longing for immortality. The sudden appearance of the very "Form of the Beautiful" brings the lover to contemplation of the Divine Beauty and enables him or her to bring forth true virtue. It makes the lover both a "friend of god" and immortal (McGinn 1991:27).

Thus, mysticism in both its extrovertive and its introvertive forms is a desire to experience the living presence of God.[2] Sadhu's own vision was an experience of the living presence of Jesus:

[2] For explanation of these forms, see Wainwright (1981:8).

> "Jesus Christ is not dead but living and it must be He Himself." So I fell at His feet and got this wonderful Peace which I could not get anywhere else. This is the joy I was wishing to get. This was heaven itself. (Streeter and Appasamy 1921:7)

The living presence of Christ is one of the main themes of Indian Christian theology. It is not the church, nor dogma, nor the Scripture which is important, but the living presence of Christ which is the beginning of "the new creation." "The central fact of Christianity thus consists in the believer coming into direct experiential touch with Christ; we must have the *anubhava* of the living Christ" (Boyd 1989:147).

Bhakti

According to L. J. Sedgwick, an English civilian well-read in Indian Literature, *bhakti* is:

> Personal faith in a personal God, love for Him as for a human being, the dedication of everything to His service, and the attainment of "Moksha" (final bliss) by this means, rather than by knowledge, or sacrifice or works (Appasamy 1970:1).

Roughly two-thirds of the adherents of Hinduism, or over half the population of India, may be said to be followers of the path of *bhakti* (Appasamy 1970:1). Doctrines and ceremonies belong to the surface of religion; they are not its heart. *Bhakti* is the actual experience of men and women who live with God; the inner religious experience which lies behind intellectual statements. There are different varieties in *bhakti* literatures in India, but there is an inner unity among them.

The question for Indian Christian theology is whether the whole course of *bhakti* is a mistaken development to be superseded by the Christian gospel, or whether *bhakti* is an effective

preparation for the Christian gospel. Is there anything in *bhakti* which needs to be absorbed into the life and essence of Indian Christianity? If Christianity in India is to become a living religion which effectively answers the many needs of the people, it will have to take careful account of what has already been achieved in the religious life of the country. Therefore, bishop Appasamy says:

> If a great architect is called upon to build a church in India he will have a design of his own and when the building is completed there will be a distinctive beauty about it. But he will use in the construction itself as much as possible the materials available in the locality. The stone, the timber, the brick, the clay, the mortar and the workmen will all come from the neighborhood. Working with these local materials he will endeavor to create an edifice at once appealing to the eye and stirring the imagination. That great architect of men's characters, our Lord Jesus Christ, does the same in His work. He takes men and women with their deepest instincts and characteristics and preserves all that is fine and true and noble in them touching them with a new beauty of His own. He does not destroy; he fulfills. He shapes the raw materials available into new and wondrous forms of beauty and impresses on them the image of His own personality. (Appasamy 1970:7)

According to Appasamy, a study of the *bhakti* saints would reveal to us the nature and the value of the spiritual heritage of India. He says that there cannot be a rich harvest of Christian experience in India until the real nature of the Indian soul is understood. It is wrong to ignore the inner capacities of the Indian temperament and to expect a rich response of fine Christian experience. Therefore, no study will be as profitable for this purpose as the study of the lives and thoughts of the *bhakti* saints (Appasamy 1970:7).

Sadhu Sunder Singh is one such Christian *bhakti* saint. In Sadhu Sunder Singh we notice a special kind of blending taking place between mystical and *bhakti* elements in such a way that they cannot be distinguished. *Bhakti* tradition consists of a personal faith in a personal God and love for God as for a human being. It also includes the dedication of everything to God's service and the attainment of *moksha* by this means, rather than by knowledge or sacrifice or works. Mysticism consists of the lover's love for beautiful things—e.g. the essential desire for happiness. For Christians, this beautiful thing is a desire for the living presence of the living Christ. These two elements are intrinsically blended in Sadhu. Therefore, Sadhu's mysticism was neither Hindu philosophical mysticism, nor St. Augustine's contemplative mysticism (see Wainwright 1981:199), but a practical and religious mysticism grown out of the Indian popular *bhakti* tradition which he inherited from his family.[3]

SADHU'S THEOLOGY OF *BHAKTI*

In this materialistic age, the study of Sadhu Sunder Singh, a person untouched by materialism, could be instructive. According to K. J. Saunders:

> Mysticism is the passionate search of the soul in love with God ... . The mystic consciousness is marked by simple, clear, and insistent ideas. ... Possessing God, the mystic desires nothing more ... . The passionate love aroused in the heart by Christ ... explains his clear insight into spiritual things, and the tenacity of his pursuit of lofty ideals. (Parker 1920:78)

Therefore, Sadhu Sunder Singh was a truly Christian mystic, and his mysticism was *Christ-centered mysticism*. Though a more

[3] For this specific division of philosophical mysticism and practical mysticism, see Francis (1987:28–43).

complete comparison of Sadhu with other Christian mystics—e.g. St. Paul, St. Francis of Assisi, St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa of Avila and others—will eventually prove necessary, one may make a few preliminary observations.[4] One finds many similarities among these mystics, but at the same time one also notices how Sadhu was different from them. In his mysticism, he was totally independent, untouched by the Western philosophical thoughts. Secondly, his thoughts were authentically original and yet Indian. The New Testament was his source book, and the human existential situation was his biblical commentary. From the day-to-day situation he picked up stories and effectively communicated truth in the form of parables. Though Sadhu was not a trained theologian, his thoughts covered the entire theological spectrum—from God, creation, sin, and evil to Christ, incarnation, cross, pain, suffering, death, judgement, salvation, kingdom of God, Bible, Church, Holy Spirit, prayer, service, and other religions. He was an instinctive theologian whose influence has been great on the whole life of the church in India.

He chose a wandering life of poverty. He did not attempt to accumulate merit or achieve perfection by self-inflicted suffering. He preferred to describe himself as a "preaching friar." His deep devotion (*bhakti*) and love for his savior filled his heart with peace. The things of the spiritual life became more real to him than those of the temporal. He accepted persecution with courage and joy.

In order to understand Sadhu's mystical union with God, I would like to quote one of his prayers from his book *At the Master's Feet.*

> My Lord God, my All in all, Life of my life, and Spirit of my spirit, look in mercy upon me and so fill me with Thy

[4] For an example of such a study, cf. Streeter and Appasamy (1926:243). They argue that Sadhu was influenced by the reading of St. Francis of Assisi.

> Holy Spirit that my heart shall have no room for love of aught but Thee. I seek from Thee no other gift but Thyself, who art the Giver of life and all its blessings. From Thee I ask not for the world or its treasures, nor yet for heaven even make request, but Thee alone do I desire and long for, and where Thou art there is heaven. The hunger and the thirst of this heart of mine can be satisfied only with Thee who hast given it birth. O Creator mine! Thou hast created my heart for Thyself alone, and not for another, therefore this my heart can find no rest or ease save in Thee ... . (Francis 1989b:28)[5]

This is the type of *bhakti* or devotion Sadhu exhibited in his life. His *bhakti* is not an *advaitic* type of self-immersion in the Absolute, but a continuous dialogue, a practice of the presence of Christ in which the distinction between oneself and the personal Christ remains clear. The goal in prayer is union with God, but this must be the union of two free individuals, not absorption in the divine. This distinction is clearly at work in the following statement:

> If we ourselves were divine, we would no longer feel any desire to worship. If we want to rejoice in God we must be different from Him; the tongue could taste no sweetness if there were no difference between it and that which it tastes. To be redeemed does not mean to be lost in or absorbed into God. We do not lose our personality in God; rather we find it. (Heiler 1927:242)

In this statement, Sadhu takes the Vedantic idea of salvation, and gives clarification in the light of the gospel which would clearly make sense to his Christian and non-Christian readers.

[5] This prayer can be compared with the prayer of the St. John of the Cross. In his *Spiritual Canticle* (stanza 34), John compares himself with the "turtledove." The turtledove never lands, perches, rests, eats, or drinks until it has found its mate; only then will it enjoy anything. Cf. Egan (1991:452).

For Sadhu, it is the human heart which is the throne and citadel of God. Once God enters the heart to abide, heaven begins in the human heart. Sadhu says this ecstatic experience cannot be explained in human language (Heiler 1927:29). Once, one of his friends asked him, "What is Ecstacy?" and Sadhu replied:

> There are pearls in the sea, but to get them you have to dive to the bottom. Ecstasy is a dive to the bottom of spiritual things. It is not a trance; but it is like a dive, because, as a diver has to stop breathing, so in Ecstasy the outward sense must be stopped. (Streeter and Appasamy 1926:132–133)

The great theme of Sadhu's preaching was Christ. Hence he proclaimed: "Christ is my life. He is everything to me in heaven and earth" (Francis 1989a:12). The cross of Christ was the central figure to which he drew the attention of all, for there he himself found peace. Thus, he could speak with the authority of the power of that cross to save others.

> I can say with confidence that the cross will bear those who bear the cross, until that cross shall lift into the presence of the Savior. (Parker 1920:83)

The cross is the key to heaven; outwardly it may appear full of nails, but in its nature it is sweet and peaceful. "The honey bee has a sting, yet it produces sweet honey" (Francis 1989b:105). The cross implies suffering. For Sadhu, suffering for Christ was as sweet as honey. To be like his lord was the one desire of Sadhu:

> So great the Joy I have in Light
> That every sorrow brings delight. (Parker 1920:84)

Sadhu's own suffering commenced with his imprisonment in Nepal on June 7, 1914, for the preaching of a new religion. His prison, like that of Paul and Silas in the New Testament, turned into a blessed heaven, a meeting place with Jesus. He said, "to be in hell with Christ would be better than to be in heaven without Him" (Parker 1920:84).

Plato's mystical approach (above, "The lover's love for beautiful things is essentially a desire for the happiness ...") is fulfilled in Sadhu. For Sadhu, God's love—including Christ's witness in life and death to that love, and the unfailing power of that love to save all who accept it—is the beautiful thing which he himself experienced when Christ appeared to him. This experience of *love* is further explained in his story of a child who was searching for his mother. The mother hid herself behind the bushes. A servant tried to persuade the child with attractive things, but the child cried out:

> No! No! I want my mother. The food she gives me is nicer than all the mangoes, and her love is far sweeter than all these flowers ... . (Francis 1989b:32)

This *love* of Christ is an important aspect of Sadhu's teaching. Once, a sage met three people on the road; the first person was pale and withered and stricken with fear. The sage asked that person, "How is it that you are in such a evil state?" The person answered, "The thought always troubles me that I may be cast into the fire of hell." The sage asked the second person, who was sitting with grief and anxiety, "Why are you so sad and full of grief?" That individual replied, "I dread lest I should be deprived of the joy and rest of heaven." Then the sage met the third one and asked, "What is the secret of your joy and peace?" The last person answered in the following manner:

> My constant prayer to Him, who taught me to worship God in spirit and in truth, is that He may grant me that I

> may love Him with heart and soul, and may serve and worship Him by love alone. Should I worship Him from fear of hell, may I be cast into it. Should I serve Him from desire of gaining heaven, may He keep me out; but should I worship Him from love alone, may He reveal Himself to me, that my whole heart may be filled with His love and presence. (Francis 1989b:198–199)

The fear of hell and the desire for heaven are blotted out in Sadhu's teaching, and selfless love, love without desire, becomes supreme. His love for his master goes hand in hand with humbleness. This is evident through his life and witness. Sadhu advised one of his fellow *sadhu*s:

> Read your Bible daily with prayer, do not flee from the Cross and do not become proud when some good people give you any honor. Remember the colt had the honor of walking on the garments which were spread by men in the way while Christ was entering Jerusalem and people were saying "Hosanna, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord". The colt had this honor because Christ was seated on it. (Francis 1989a:18)

This is the type of humble ministry Sadhu advocated in India with his own exemplary life and teaching.

We noted above how skillfully the followers of Christ blended the Old Testament, New Testament, and the Greek religious thoughts into Christian thought forms. However, missing in their effort is the inclusion of the Hindu philosophical and religious thought forms. Sadhu Sunder Singh, who was well read in Hindu texts, Buddhist teachings, the sacred books of the Islam, and Christian writings attempted to bridge this gap.[6] The follow-

[6] Sadhu Sunder Singh's book on *The Search After Reality* (1925) shows his understanding of these major religions.

ing is an example which shows his efforts with regard to the the Upanishadic teaching that the human's ultimate goal is the realization of the *oneness* of the *brahman* and *atman*:

> It is said to be the supreme end of man's effort, the termination of personal life! "This is the supreme end of that, this is the supreme treasure of that, this the supreme dwelling of that, this is the supreme joy of that" [Brhad. IV. 3.32]. (Francis 1987:30)

The oneness (or union) between the individual who is the bearer of the *atman* and the ultimate reality, the *brahman*, is further explained in the following story:

> Two birds, akin and friends, cling to the self-same tree. One of them eats the sweet berry, but the other gazes upon him without eating. In the same tree—the world tree—man dwells along with God. With troubles overwhelmed, he faints and grieves at his own helplessness. But when he sees the other, the Lord in whom he delights—ah, what glory is his, his troubles pass away (Mund III 1:2) ... . He (man) is divinised or brahmanised and becomes *purana* or perfect. He goes from mortality to eternity. (Francis 1987:31)

Sadhu used these thought forms in his writings to communicate the Christian message, but he never failed to make certain corrections. According to the Upanishadic story of the two birds, the human becomes divine; but in Sadhu's teaching we become united with God, though we do not become God. Therefore, Sadhu clearly distinguishes Christian unity with the divine from Hindu nondualistic *advaita*.

> If a piece of cold iron is placed in a hot fire it will glow because the fire is in it. Yet we cannot say that the iron is

> fire or the fire is iron. So in Jesus Christ we retain our identity; He in us and we in Him, but with our own individuality. Again we breath air, yet man is not air nor is the air man. So we breathe by prayer the Holy Spirit of God, but we are not God. (Parker 1920:141)

> If Christ lives in us, our whole life will become Christlike. Salt which has been dissolved in water may disappear, but it does not cease to exist. We know it is there when we taste the water. (Heiler 1927:170)

In these small stories, the Upanishadic thought forms are blended, modified with Christian thoughts, and corrected with the Pauline language of being "in Christ" (or "indwelling Christ").

His blending of ideas is further clarified in his teaching on sin and suffering in the light of Hindu *karma* theory. For Sadhu, God is not a judge of sinners; it is sin which judges them, and they must die for their sin. If God is love, how can that loving God condemn us and give us everlasting punishment? Sadhu's opinion was that "God has never sent anyone to hell, and He never will send anyone there; it is sin which drives souls into hell" (Heiler 1927:140). God does not hate the sinner, but sinners on their side love sin and hate Christ. Sadhu firmly believed in retribution for sin, but he regarded this as brought about by internal necessity, an inevitable degeneration of the personality which brings its own punishment in that the personality is completely incapacitated for life in heaven. Therefore, punishment is not divine anger. According to Sadhu, "God punishes no one" (Heiler 1927:140). Punishment is the retributory process.

This kind of teaching derives directly from the Hindu theory of *karma*. The doctrine of *karma* teaches that any sorrow, misfortune, degradation, or disease from which the individual may now be suffering is an exact and just retribution for some sin committed by that person in a previous life. This comes about automatically via the law of cause and effect. By the same law, every

sin we commit in this life will be paid for by an equivalent suffering when we return to earth in our next reincarnation. Necessarily, this doctrine can admit no remission of sin (Streeter and Appasamy 1926:158). Salvation is not forgiveness of sin, but freedom from sin. Therefore, for Sadhu, retribution is automatic; it is not the divine wrath.

In one of the large northern cities, Sadhu was introduced to a famous Hindu preacher who was considered a profound scholar in the Vedas. Sadhu heard the preacher lecture on the Hindu scriptures:

> The Vedas reveal to us the need of redemption from sin, but where is the redeemer? The "Prajapathi," of whom the Vedas speak, is Christ who has given His life as a ransom for sinners. (Parker 1920:89)

When questioned afterwards by Hindus, the lecturer said, "It is I who believe in the Vedas and not you, because I believe in Him whom the Vedas reveal, that is Christ" (Parker 1920:89). After hearing this, Sadhu declared that the great need of our age is that the Church have a broad vision—that the Christian transcend the limitations of sect and creed, and be prepared to recognize the Spirit of God in whatever form God may be made manifest (Parker 1920:89).

In addition, Sadhu fully believed the *sannyasi* (*sadhu*) mission was being blessed by God. Although it had taken an unaccustomed form, the mission was given to its leaders in order to do great things for India (Parker 1920:90). Though Sadhu advocated the *sadhu* ideal for the Indian church, we should clearly distinguish Christian *sadhu*s from Hindu *sadhu*s. This distinction is evident in his own words:

> I tell Hindu sadhus: "You are sadhus because you want to torture yourself. I am a sadhu to serve. I do not torture myself, though I have been tortured. I have not renounced

> the world. I want to be in the world and yet not of the world." (Streeter and Appasamy 1926:243–244).

With this statement, Sadhu not only distinguished himself from his Hindu counterparts, but also from Christian mystics like Francis of Assisi and St. John of the Cross. St. Francis preferred torturing his body and prayed:

> My Lord Jesus Christ, I pray you to grant me two graces before I die: the first is that during my life I may feel in my soul and in my body as much as possible, that pain which you, dear Jesus, sustained in the hour of your most bitter Passion. (Egan 1991:215–216)

And St. John of the Cross prayed:

> Lord, what I wish you to give me are sufferings to be borne for your sake, and that I may be despised and regarded as worthless. (Cummins 1991:4)

Both St. Francis and St. John of the Cross chose the marks of Christ's body as the way of suffering. For Sadhu, however, the mark of Christ's suffering was service. Sadhu was closer in this regard to Teresa of Avila, a mystic who combined her mystical experiences with her fruitful life of active service (Egan 1991:437,445).

CONCLUSION

The voices that were heard summoning the Indian church to be truly Indian in its pattern of worship and theology during the formative period of Sadhu's life were taken seriously by Sadhu in his life and ministry. As Streeter and Appasamy correctly state, "One who is himself so completely Indian naturally desires a completely Indian Church" (Streeter and Appasamy 1926:229). Accordingly, Sadhu desired a completely Indian church, but he

was not specific as to which "completely Indian church" he desired; he only indicated "a Church constituted according to Indian methods and ideals" (Streeter and Appasamy 1926:229). According to Sadhu, "Indians greatly need the Water of Life, but they do not want it in European vessels" (Heiler 1927:232).

Sadhu treated non-Christian religions in a friendly manner. He often emphasized that "the non-Christian thinkers also have received light from the Sun of Righteousness. The Hindus have received of the Holy Spirit" (Heiler 1927:232). Hinduism, for Sadhu, like many other Indian theologians, is a *preparatio evangelica* (though Sadhu did not use this phrase); Christianity is the fulfillment of Hinduism. "Hinduism has been digging channels. Christ is the water to flow through these channels" (Streeter and Appasamy 1926:232).

The genuineness of the ministry of Sadhu Sunder Singh is evident from the fruits of his labor, and Sadhu's successful ministry shows the need for diversified ministries in India. Sadhu's emphasis on *bhakti marga* in association with mysticism will remain a central theme in the Christian theology of India. His Christ-like personality and ministry will remain a challenge and a searching criticism to the Indian Church—and to the errors and superficialities which are so evident in Christianity all over the world. "The essence of Christianity," which many consider lost after Constantine, may be found again in Sadhu.

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Book Reviews

The Pentateuch: an Introduction to the First Five Books of the Bible. Anchor Bible Reference Library. By Joseph Blenkinsopp. Doubleday, 1992, 273 pages.

One can hardly overestimate the importance of the Pentateuch for both the Jewish and Christian faiths. Therefore, one expects much from any work which purports to introduce students to the study of the Pentateuchal texts—including some accounting for this importance. What is it that has made the first five books of the Bible of such vital interest to the Jewish and Christian communities of faith? Given the vitality evident in much of the modern literary, historical, sociological, and anthropological study of the biblical texts, one also expects an introduction to demonstrate these methods and their results for students.

Joseph Blenkinsopp appears well aware of the precarious position of anyone who attempts such an introduction in the present scholarly climate. He is all too aware that the consensus built around Wellhausen's presentation of the source-critical investigation of the Pentateuch has crumbled—and that no single, unified theory has arisen to take its place. As Blenkinsopp demonstrates, scholarly discussion of Pentateuchal sources has moved from an almost monolithic hegemony to near bedlam (though one may object to such negative evaluations of either period of scholarly

discourse). It is unsafe to assume any longer that one's conversation partner in the critical study of the Old Testament will even agree to the merits of a discussion of the existence of sources, much less agree to a particular delimitation of those sources.

It is to Blenkinsopp's credit that, though he recognizes the peril of saying anything about the Pentateuch at present, he does not allow the current state of affairs to coerce him into silence. He finds a middle way. In the first chapter of the book, Blenkinsopp provides a thorough overview of the past two centuries of historical-critical investigation of the Pentateuch and a summary of the present crisis in this investigation as a backdrop for his own synthetic methodology. He is to be praised for the moderation in evidence as he sets out his methodological procedure at the end of the first chapter. This is especially true of his stance toward the more recent literary approaches to the Bible, though one may wish that he had taken them more into account beyond the first chapter. Blenkinsopp is convinced that the competing interpretive systems in existence today are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and he calls for an "edict of toleration," a respect for the gains of past centuries (e.g., including those of medieval Jewish exegetes, p. 28). It is refreshing to find a contemporary author who is sympathetic (at least theoretically) to holistic literary readings of the Bible *and* who simultaneously rejects the common assumption that those who engage in historical-critical investigation do so with an intent to fragment the text. It is important that Blenkinsopp's point be heard: "there are aspects of religious experience and levels of meaning in biblical texts accessible only by using a historical-critical approach to them" (p. 28).

However, Blenkinsopp's own historical vision is strangely myopic. He has an excellent *breadth* of vision. His emphasis on the details of the story line, the structure of the Pentateuch, and the meaning of that structure for the period in which the final form of the Pentateuch came into being, is an emphasis which has too often been neglected. His use of Van Seters's work for comparing the Pentateuch to ancient historiographical works should

also be commended, though one may wish for more comparison with Babylonian and Assyrian historiography. His use of a plethora of ancient texts (Sumerian, Babylonian, Assyrian, Hittite, Ugaritic, Egyptian, and Greek), often comparing their literary features with those of the biblical texts, is frequently enlightening—as is his emphasis on the often slighted legal material (chapter 6, though one wonders at the omission of any reference to Raymond Westbrook's recent works on law in the ancient Near East).

It is Blenkinsopp's *depth* of vision that leaves something to be desired. He follows the recent tendency toward lower (later) dating almost exclusively—i.e., few sources positively identifiable as ancient were incorporated by the author of the Pentateuch (and larger history), therefore most sources (if they existed) were relatively late. With regard to the dating of sources, he has obviously not found a middle way. He follows Perlitt with a late dating for the concept of covenant and finds "Deuteronomic flavor" (more precisely a D component/redaction) in Genesis through Numbers (pp. 130, 158). Though he will (in theory) consider the possibility that one or another of the passages traditionally assigned to J or E was "transmitted more or less unaltered from an early date," his practice results in the virtual elimination of any monarchical setting as a context for interpretation (p. 130). The only historical period of consequence for the history of the composition of the Pentateuch is the late (or even post-) exilic period. This is somewhat ironic. Blenkinsopp himself readily admits (p. 26) that such a stance has no more foundation than the assumption that every source not positively identifiable as late must be early. His own predilection in this regard is most obvious in his treatment of arguments made by members of the Albright school, and he is simply wrong in his assumption of a correlation between theological conservatism and a "predilection for higher dating" (p. 20). This correlation is hardly applicable to the third and fourth generations of the school (e.g., this reviewer and many of his colleagues).

The value of this book as an introductory text for students is in its frank admission of the state of scholarly discussion concerning the composition of the Pentateuch. Students who are introduced to the Pentateuch via earlier works may gain the erroneous impression that there is a scholarly consensus (or near consensus) on this question. On the other hand, this introduction leaves much to be desired in several areas: 1) instead of simply reciting the various hypotheses which have been proposed, the work proffers another untested hypothesis regarding the composition of the Pentateuch; 2) much of the work is spent arguing for this new hypothesis and against other hypotheses—i.e., it assumes a working knowledge of the history of the interpretation of the Pentateuch which is hardly introductory; 3) the body of the work reflects little, if any, of the vitality evident in recent literary approaches to the biblical text. Finally, one can only lament the author's decision to introduce the Pentateuch without an exploration of its theological significance for the various communities of faith—those who composed and preserved it, and those who read it in worship "to this very day."

—GREGORY L. GLOVER
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Telling Tales: Making Sense of Christian and Judaic Nonsense: The Urgency and Basis for Judeo-Christian Dialogue. By Jacob Neusner. Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993, 170 pages.

In a sense, it is not surprising that a book by Jacob Neusner on Judeo-Christian dialogue should be a provocative critique of methodology. Neusner has stirred methodological controversy throughout his distinguished career, first as a professor of Judaic Studies at Brown University and now as a researcher in Religious Studies at the University of South Florida. His reputation as an innovator was acquired in a ground-breaking form-critical investigation of *The Rabbinic Traditions About the Pharisees Before 70* (3 volumes, Brill, 1971). His insights were sharpened by full-

scale studies into the principles of Rabbinical writing, starting with *A History of the Mishnaic Law of Purities* (22 parts, Brill, 1974-1977). He also authored the influential series *Method and Meaning in Ancient Judaism* (Brown Judaic Studies 10, 15 and 16, Scholars Press, 1979-1980).

With his talent for method, it is perhaps only natural that a prolific writer like Neusner should tackle the knotty issue of dialogue between Jews and Christians. Yet, there is nothing pedantic about this book. Rabbi Neusner writes as a faithful Jew to all who believe in "the one God of Abraham—speaking, in Christianity, through Jesus Christ God incarnate, in Islam through the Prophet and the Quran, and in Judaism through the Torah" (p. 19). He believes that the religious monotheism taught in common by Judaism, Christianity and Islam has come "to a triumphant moment: it has survived, it has endured, it has kept the faith, it has a faith to set forth" (p. 19). It also has found a receptive audience sick of modern idolatries and ready for a fresh word of faith concerning the one true God. Still, Neusner wonders whether the religions of monotheism are up to the task, for they have made the message incomprehensible to all but their own sectarians by piling upon it the shibboleths and battle cries of their monotheist civil war.

Now, however, this warfare has ebbed with the flow of history. Christianity and Islam have reached an equilibrium and are seeking only to "hold things as they are" (p. 17). Judaism has emerged from its darkest hour to find new strength in the nation-state of Israel. These three religions have an unprecedented opportunity to engage in dialogue as equals for the sake of monotheistic renewal. For, in dialogue with each other, they may yet learn to "speak intelligibly" and perhaps "even find some one thing to say together" in witness to the world (p. 23). The matter is urgent, for no one knows when the tide of history will turn again. Yet, immediate dialogue with Islam is precluded by the current climate of socio-political alienation. Judaism and Christianity must show the way, for they have lived together in a

continuous "community of shared experience" (p. 22, n. 2). Despite a tortured past, "no two religions in history have found more in common about which to talk" (p. 23).

In the title of "Part One," Neusner boldly declares his critique: "There has been no Judeo-Christian dialogue," only "two monologues" and a "conspiracy of hypocrites" (p. 25). This charge owes much to recent theories of interfaith dialogue, which take seriously the position and integrity of each party and demand an unprejudiced outcome so as to allow for "the possibility of conceding the legitimacy of the other's viewpoint" (p. 27). Judged by this standard of mutuality, the history of Judeo-Christian discourse is dark indeed. Yet, Neusner believes he has found the one bright spot. In books such as *Judaism in the Matrix of Christianity* (Fortress, 1986), Neusner argued that the fourth century saw an evolution of Jewish identity in response to the changing status of Christians in the Roman Empire. Now, he maintains that the same century produced the first and only authentic Judeo-Christian dialogue. Bishops such as Eusebius, Chrysostom, and Aphrahat ("each in his own way") confronted the Jewish opposition "with dignity" over issues of mutual concern—e.g., the Messiah's identity, Israel's salvific role, and the meaning of history (p. 33). Every subsequent attempt at dialogue has served only as an occasion for sectarian monologue, with Jews and Christians shadowboxing distorted images of each other (p. 49). Even the colloquy of Martin Buber and Karl Ludwig Schmidt in 1933 on the eve of Hitler's rise to power differed little from the one-sided "disputations of the Middle Ages" (pp. 30, 36).

Many would undoubtedly concede Neusner's historical point, at least up to and including World War II. However, since then, there has emerged an extensive network of organizations promoting Judeo-Christian dialogue—e.g., the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations (IJCIC) and the WCC's Committee on the Church and the Jewish People (CCJP). Few would be willing to dismiss these honest efforts. Yet, since "goodwill makes bigots into hypocrites" (p. 86), Neusner still

sees a conspiracy of distortion at work. The irenic change of tone is a ruse, for Jews and Christians manufacture "soft versions" of their own traditions only to avoid debating issues that really matter. Thus, both applaud the Jewishness of Jesus, but neither mentions the Christian doctrine of incarnation or the Jewish concept of holy Israel "in all its dimensions, involving the state, the land, the people there and everywhere" (p. 140). These are ideas which are central to their respective faiths but nonsense to the opposition.

In "Parts Two and Three," Neusner attempts to move beyond this impasse. He calls for each religion to imagine in its own terms the fundamental conceptions of the other faith and to sympathetically retell the other's tales until they begin to make sense. But by then, authentic dialogue will already have occurred.

Neusner's perspective is fresh and stimulating and, despite the negativism of his critique, it is ultimately constructive. His book will undoubtedly be discussed extensively in the very circles of Jewish and Christian interaction that he finds so hypocritical. The fact that such a dialogue will occur is both a recommendation and a rebuke of the author. This excellent book, complete with a forward by Martin Marty and two useful indexes (General and Biblical-Talmudic), is recommended as useful to Jews and Christians already engaged in authentic dialogue. Again, this is itself a rebuke to Neusner's charge of hypocrisy. The truth is that Judeo-Christian dialogue is alive and well—and, for decades, has been slowly working upon a common agenda. The Jewishness of Jesus heads the list, not because of its safety, but because of its importance. It is important to Jews, because the story of Yeshua belongs to the history of holy Israel. It is important to Christians, because the humanity of Jesus is as much a part of the incarnation as his divinity. Neusner's service to authentic Judeo-Christian dialogue is not that of initiation, but rather that of a reminder of its urgency—and a means of advancing the agenda.

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Theocracy in Paul's Praxis and Theology. By Dieter Georgi. Translated by David E. Green. Fortress Press, 1991, xii + 112 pages.

Dieter Georgi, Professor of New Testament at the University of Frankfurt since 1987, has been contributing to the discipline of Pauline studies for over thirty years, but has only become well known to those limited to the English language within the last decade. Georgi's long-standing interest in the social scientific dimensions of Pauline thought can be seen in his two best-known previous works (*The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986]; and *Remembering the Poor* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1992])—both published in German some thirty years ago. The present monograph emerged from a conference presentation published as "Gott auf den Kopf stellen" in *Religions-theorie und politische Theologie*, vol. 3: *Theokratie*, ed. Jacob Taubes, (Munich: W. Fink; Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 1987).

Georgi's basic thesis is that Paul's life and writings were a major confrontation, not only to the religious presuppositions of his day (as most interpreters will readily allow), but to the political and social understandings of his ethos as well. This latter element is the more controversial. Throughout the history of the church, Paul has frequently been seen as a defender of the *status quo*. Thus, Paul has been read as championing the Roman political order, as defending the established structure of slavery, and as a misogynist intent on "keeping women in their place." Such readings often have been the basis for either embracing or rejecting Paul and his message—depending upon the perspective of the interpreter.

Such reactions are misplaced, according to Georgi, for they are based upon thoroughgoing misreadings of Paul. To be sure, they are readings which are not difficult to find, for they appear to shimmer on the surface of Paul's writings. Georgi, however, contends that such readings are only a mirage intended to provide

some degree of protection for Paul and for those gathered around him from those in power who are offended by the radical reality of Paul's gospel message. The implication, of course, is that the mirage worked all too well; it has fooled modern readers far more than it ever fooled anyone who interacted with Paul in his own day. To find the real Paul, Georgi argues, one must move behind the coded communication to examine the presuppositions and tendencies at the heart of Paul's message.

Only a brief synopsis of Georgi's argument will be offered here. He begins by quickly surveying the influence of theocracy within the history of Israel, demonstrating Paul's reliance upon the wisdom tradition through the influences of apocalypticism, Jewish missionary theology and gnosticism. The second chapter examines Paul's Damascus conversion experience. Georgi suggests that the Damascus experience strengthened Paul's sense of solidarity between God and humanity—rather than having some personal, pietistic effect. This orientation is traced through an examination of First Thessalonians. Georgi demonstrates that when "God joins the people" (p. 25), the eschatology of the community of faith is directed toward realities such as faith, hope and charity—rather than trust in the supposed peace and security of the *Pax Romana*.

Georgi next sketches his understanding of Paul's vision of an "alternative utopia" by testing his hypothesis upon several epistles. Galatians is read as emphasizing the parody inherent in a cross which breaks the power of established law. The vision, as it occurs in Galatians, is that the cross serves to abolish all worldly distinctions and to create a new reality where everything is united under a divine universal law. First Corinthians is seen as emphasizing the corporate implications of Christ—i.e., the production of a community "based on participatory democracy" (p. 59). Moving to Second Corinthians, Georgi extends this broad-based, egalitarian "utopia" to Paul's relations with the congregations he founded, highlighting the self-deprecatory way in which Paul responded to challenges to his own authority. Lastly,

Philippians is studied to detect a carefully camouflaged challenge to the power structure which imprisoned Paul. This challenge is found, not in worldly renunciation (as texts like 3:20 are sometimes read), but in the long-awaited world transformation which will cause all powers to "bend their knees" before Jesus.

The final chapter focuses on Jewish missionary theology and Roman political theology. Romans is the centerpiece in this chapter—understandable in light of the problematic call in 13:1-7 for obedience to civil authorities. But Georgi de-emphasizes this passage, seeing the main point in the verses (13:8-14) which use the ethics of love to undermine an ideology of state majesty and centralization. Rather, he highlights passages such as 3:21-26 and 7:7-24, which reassess the role of law in both the spiritual realm and the realm of social organization. Ultimately, salvation is seen as directly opposed to human power and authority, and Georgi pulls no punches in suggesting that this opposition was clearly understood by those who wielded civil power—despite all the protective code language. Thus, Georgi concludes that Paul was viewed by the civil authorities as engaging in "political aggression" against the empire, and that he probably was convicted of treason.

It should be obvious by now that reactions to this book will be shaped largely by the social and political sympathies of the reader. This reviewer must acknowledge frankly a considerable sympathy to Georgi's argument, but nagging questions still remain. Any project which relies heavily on arguments from silence, on "digging beneath the surface" to uncover hidden agenda and presuppositions, is a hazardous undertaking; there are few controls.

The suspicion always exists that modern issues are being pasted back onto a message and environment to which they are entirely foreign. Georgi himself hints at this in the preface as he acknowledges that terms like "sovereignty" are relatively modern (pp. viii–ix). One wonders whether his sense of participatory democracy was really Paul's utopian vision of first-century socio-

political organization. And the fact remains that much of what we know about Paul squarely indicates that he was content to live and work within the existing orders of his day.

It is problematic that words quite central to Georgi's argument (e.g., "theocracy") are not given precise definitions; a few unusual terms are encountered as well. Georgi could have solidified his case by examining in more detail the social and political implications of well-known Pauline terminology—e.g., "faith, peace, righteousness," and "gospel."

For the size of the work, there are excellent indices for scripture and the Pseudepigrapha, Nag Hammadi texts, Greek and Latin authors and early Christian literature, as well as indices to modern authors and selected lists of Greek and Latin words and topical subjects. Scholars in the field will be interested in the provocative new lens which this work provides for our view of Paul; pastors and students will also find it helpful. Beyond the discipline of Pauline studies, this book will be useful in courses on hermeneutics and on the relation between scripture and social scientific interpretation (where work on Paul has lagged behind that done on Jesus and the gospels).

Whether one finally accepts or rejects Georgi's argument, it is presented with verve. New approaches to old questions are always welcome, and the provocative possibilities suggested by this hypothesis will offer vigorous exercise for any reader.

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PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing. By Rosemary Radford Ruether. HarperSanFrancisco, 1992, 310 pages.

Rosemary Radford Ruether's latest book is a groundbreaking new addition to both the fields of ecofeminism and feminist theology. In *Gaia And God*, Ruether brings her wide-ranging knowledge and passionate concern for ecological and human justice to bear

on one critical question, "Are Gaia, the living and sacred earth, and God, the monotheistic deity of the biblical traditions, on speaking terms with each other"(p. 1)? She explores this question by using the critical lens of ecofeminism to evaluate the heritage of Western Christian culture.

Ecofeminism is a new term to many people, so Ruether is careful to present her understanding of ecofeminism in her introduction. She first points out that the roots of ecofeminism lie in deep ecology and radical feminism—both of which explore the symbolic, psychological and ethical patterns of culture and consciousness which have led to the domination of the earth (deep ecology) or of women (radical feminism). Ecofeminism, Ruether explains, "brings together these two explorations of ecology and feminism, in their full or deep forms, and explores how male domination of women and domination of nature are interconnected, both in cultural ideology and in social structures" (p. 2).

From a Christian ecofeminist perspective, Ruether asserts that the Western Christian tradition, with its roots in Babylonian, Hebrew and Greek cultures, is the "major culture and system of domination that has pressed humans and the earth into the crises of ecological unsustainability, poverty and militarism we now experience" (p. 10). Given this conviction, she seeks to examine the culture and traditions for which she is accountable in order, first, to unmask the destructive elements and second, to recover usable ideas which can further the task of healing and justice among nations, races, sexes, and the entire earth community. A key aspect of Ruether's methodology, therefore, is her practice of bringing a hermeneutic of suspicion *and* appreciation to bear upon every tradition and body of knowledge. Thus, Ruether neither underestimates the damage done by Western Christian traditions nor dismisses them as unredeemable. Recognizing that there is "no ready-made ecological spirituality" (p. 206), Ruether shoulders the monumental task of separating the "precious legacy" within Christianity from the "toxic waste of sacralized domination" (p. 3).

Gaia and God is organized into four sections: (1) Creation, (2) Destruction, (3) Domination and Deceit, and (4) Healing. In the first three sections, classical and religious narratives are juxtaposed with modern narratives in a dialectical exploration of each section's theme. Ruether's apparent aim is to bring historical/religious and modern/secular beliefs and bodies of knowledge into dialogue with each other, in the conviction that we need to utilize the wisdom of all available traditions for the urgent task of earth healing.

"Earth healing" is in fact the goal of Ruether's quest, as stated in the introduction, and it becomes the explicit focus of attention in section four. In this section, Ruether turns to the creative and constructive task of uncovering the liberating potential of Christian traditions. She chooses to explore two lines of Christian tradition which she considers complementary: the covenantal tradition and the sacramental tradition. One of Ruether's strengths is her capacity to present complex historical developments in theology and culture succinctly and clearly. Her theological conclusions are always grounded in thorough historical analysis. Not surprisingly, therefore, her discussion of the covenantal tradition proceeds historically—from its Hebraic biblical roots, through its submergence in early and medieval Christianity, up to its reappearance in Reformation and Puritan theology. In spite of its androcentric, anthropocentric and ethnocentric limitations in all of its premodern forms, Ruether asserts that the covenantal tradition has many usable ideas to offer a modern ecological theology. For example, the biblical understanding of God placed limitations on human use of creation. Human authority over nature was delegated, not absolute. Thus, a modern covenantal vision would acknowledge the role of humans as caretakers who are ultimately accountable to God. Such a vision would recognize that "humans and other life forms are part of one family ... one community of interdependence" (p. 227).

Ruether also examines the sacramental tradition historically—from the roots of the tradition in Hellenistic thought

up to its current manifestations in the work of Matthew Fox, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and process theology. Weaving together the early Christian apprehension that "the whole cosmos was alive, pervaded by dynamic energy" with Irenaeus' belief in the ultimate redemption of the entire cosmos, Ruether offers her own constructive vision: an "ecofeminist theocosmology." God is the "Matrix of life" undergirding the very structure of the universe, Ruether argues, calling for a return to an understanding of salvation that values earthly blessedness rather than disembodied immortality.

Throughout her section on "Healing," Ruether exudes confidence in the ability of Christianity to rise to meet the theological challenge posed by the ecological crisis. She acknowledges that many people have felt the need to move outside the Christian religion, seeking to resurrect pagan gods and goddesses as an alternative to an antinatural Christianity. Ruether, however, persuasively argues that "for Christian ecological thinkers ... the biblical God and Gaia are not at odds; rightly understood, they are on terms of amity, if not commingling" (p. 240). She finds the resources within Christianity to envision a God who celebrates and protects, rather than denigrates, nature. From the covenantal tradition she hears the voice of a masculine divinity speaking on behalf of the weak and laying down laws to protect the powerless. From the sacramental tradition she hears the voice of a feminine divinity, the voice of Gaia, speaking from the heart of matter and beckoning us into communion. She emphatically affirms that "We need both of these holy voices," the voices of God and of Gaia (p. 255).

Ruether's voice in *Gaia and God* is also a much needed voice. In this sophisticated, scholarly work she offers a trenchant feminist analysis of Christian complicity with global systems of domination. She calls Christians to account for the human and ecological crises our traditions have helped to create—yet she also finds resources for rebuilding a post-patriarchal, justice-loving, ecological Christianity in its place. Her feminist analysis has bene-

fitted from the criticisms of non-white women worldwide, as she consistently demonstrates the interconnected nature of oppression. Sexism, classism, racism and the domination of the earth are revealed by Ruether to be the many heads of one monster, rather than isolated and unrelated phenomena. One weakness in Ruether's analysis appears at precisely this point, however. She fails to address one major system of human domination which is intimately connected to all the others. Compulsory heterosexism and the concomitant fear and hatred of sexual minorities is a deadly human disease which has become more virulent in recent years. No Christian theologian concerned with justice and human welfare can afford to ignore the increasing waves of violence and hatred which have been directed toward gays, lesbians and other sexual minorities in recent years. To ask her to confront boldly *all* forms of human prejudice and domination is only to expect her to rise to meet her own standards.

In spite of this omission, Rosemary Radford Ruether's *Gaia and God* makes a tremendous contribution to the ongoing task of building a more just, participatory, and sustainable society. The clarity, sophistication and accessibility of the book make it an excellent addition to a course syllabus on feminist theology, contemporary theology, or ecological theology and ethics. It is especially helpful as an introduction to Christian ecofeminism. Ruether clearly proves that God and Gaia can and must be on speaking terms, and she invites us all to enter into the dialogue between the living and sacred earth and her passionate and compassionate Creator.

—JANET L. PARKER
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She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse. By Elizabeth A. Johnson. Crossroad, 1992, 316 pages.

In her comprehensive study, *She Who Is*, Roman Catholic theologian Elizabeth A. Johnson constructs a doctrine of God that

draws deeply from the resources of Christian tradition and is at the same time decidedly feminist. Johnson's stated purpose is, in fact, "to connect feminist and classical wisdom" (p. 8). After drawing such a connection (Parts I and II), Johnson makes two major constructive moves: (1) she re-images the trinitarian God of the classical tradition in terms of female analogies (Part III), and (2) she re-envisions, in light of understanding God as *she*, the relationship of God to the world (Part IV).

While Johnson recognizes that the classical tradition in many ways certainly served to promote sexism and to deny the full humanity of women, she nonetheless wants to "give (classical thought) a hearing ... listening for wisdom that may yet prove useful" (p. 9). Johnson assesses the classical tradition through the lens of women's experience. This is not because she thinks that women's experience is inherently more valuable to the construction of a doctrine of God than is men's experience, but because women's experience, and the contributions it might make to such a construction, has been sorely neglected by a patriarchal history. Adopting the feminist criterion articulated by Rosemary Radford Ruether as the "principle of the promotion of the full humanity of women," which she claims is in fact consistent with the classical doctrine of the *imago dei* (p. 31), Johnson proceeds by "critically analyzing inherited oppressions, searching for alternative wisdom and suppressed history, and risking new interpretations of the tradition in conversation with women's lives" (p. 29).

Johnson points out that the notion of divine mystery is central to Christian scripture and tradition. Who God is cannot be exhausted by any particular metaphor or group of metaphors, Johnson argues, evoking Aquinas's position that finite creatures can only understand the infinite God analogically (p. 113). To hold that God is *only* male or *only* female is to cling to an idol rather than to worship the mysterious, hidden God (p. 18).

Further, it is of critical importance that we begin to use female images for God if we are indeed concerned about promoting the full humanity of women. If God is understood only as

male—even if "he" is a male with "feminine traits" or "dimensions" (p. 47)—a theological message is inevitably being sent that the male is more fully created in the image of God. The male is not only definitively human, but is actually God-like. Johnson cites Daly in this regard: "If God is male, then the male is God" (p. 37). The oppression of women is a fact of history precisely because the status of the female has been calculated in relation to the god-male; women, as less-human beings, have been socialized to occupy roles characterized by submission, unquestioning obedience, and passivity.

In exploring female metaphors for God, Johnson draws on three sources: scripture, tradition, and women's experience (Part II). Retrieving a character sketch drawn in the books of Proverbs and the Wisdom of Solomon, Johnson compels us to grapple with the persona of Sophia-Wisdom: Sophia prophesies in the streets of the city, beckoning its inhabitants to deepened understanding; she created all things and orchestrates the redemptive events of salvation history (pp. 87–89).

Johnson claims that Sophia-Wisdom is most appropriately understood as a triune being (Part III). While it is important to keep in mind the "analogical nature of number" (lest we conceive of God as divided into three parts), the three-in-one formulation reminds us both of the divine relationality and the divine unity (p. 204). Articulating her trinitarian understanding in terms of Spirit-Sophia, Jesus-Sophia, and Mother-Sophia, Johnson chooses to reverse the traditional ordering of the three hypostases. While she began writing her book with the traditional ordering in mind, Johnson explains, "feminist consciousness subverted," and she realized that it would be appropriate to begin her study where "the dialectic of God's presence and absence shapes life in all its struggle" (p. 121).

When God is considered as a "she," insights about the nature of God, often underemphasized in an androcentric conceptuality, can emerge more clearly. While male analogies usually accentuate the reality of the transcendent God's distance from the

world, female analogies tend to begin with God's immanence and interdependence with the world (Part IV). He who is omnipotent is also she who compassionately suffers with us, Johnson insists (chapter 12).

It is somewhat startling, given Johnson's commitment to the classical tradition, to find her arguing near the end of the book for a panentheistic understanding of the relationship between God and the world (pp. 230–233). In developing this point, one of the images Johnson evokes is that of a pregnant woman who has chosen to give birth to a child (p. 234). As the child develops inside of her body, the woman exists in mutual relation to it. The child is in the woman as the world is in God; God as Sophia-Mother nurtures us and is affected by us even as a mother supports, rejoices in, and is made uncomfortable by her unborn baby.

The classical tradition has rejected forms of panentheism that entail an equation between God and the world, but Johnson's panentheism in no way entails such an equation. Johnson's conceptualization takes seriously the concerns of the classical tradition: her understanding of panentheism requires that God and the world remain distinct (as the pregnant woman is distinct from her unborn child), and that God not be "exhausted by the universe" which she contains (p. 231). Johnson's formulation implies that, while God is conditioned by the world, the divine aseity (independence, self-derivation) is not violated by this conditioning.

One of Johnson's many strengths is that she is not afraid to work constructively, utilizing elements drawn from what are often considered conflicting theological strands. The connections she makes between feminist theology and the classical tradition will be of particular importance, for example, to the many Christian women who desire to call themselves feminists but do not want to "give up" those elements of the classical tradition that they view as essential to their faith experience. Nonetheless, at times Johnson too readily integrates feminist thinking with the teachings of the classical tradition. For example, she does not deal extensively with the fact that many feminist theologians (e.g.,

Sallie McFague and Carter Heyward) reject realist conceptions of a God who exists apart from human experience. While for many feminists divine analogies are not only all we have but also all there is, for Johnson there is a God toward which our limited analogies point. It might have been helpful if Johnson had struggled explicitly with her realist conception of God in relation to other feminist perspectives.

Johnson is a constructive theologian who creatively dabs from a palette filled with the colors of scripture, tradition, and women's experience to paint one particular portrait of the inexhaustible God. She does not believe that her portrait is a better or a final one, and encourages us to "keep faith with the question" of who God is, "creating, testing, reflecting, discarding, keeping" (epilogue). Clearly, Johnson's outlook is that we who are theologians are not all doing our own separate theologies. Rather, we are all engaged in one theological enterprise—offering wisdom from a diversity of perspectives. And is not this what it should mean to be a theologian, that we learn from one another in our struggle to express the mystery of God?

—CYNTHIA L. RIGBY
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Theology and the University. Eds. David Ray Griffith and Joseph C. Hough, Jr. State University of New York Press, 1991, 276 pages.

The present relation of Christian theology to the nonsectarian university is, viewed historically, an aberration. Throughout the centuries during which higher education has been an institution in western culture, theology has been not only a part of the academy, but a privileged part. Aquinas saw it as the Queen of the Sciences (cf. *Summa* I QQ 1–4; 20–23). More recently—until, approximately, the 1940s—one found a pattern in which the college president was an ordained minister and taught a required course in

Christian ethics for seniors. This was the case in avowedly non-sectarian as well as denominational colleges and universities in the United States.

All of this began to change after World War II. "Religion" in secular institutions no longer meant the Protestantism of the North American majority. By the end of the turmoil of the 1960s, the study of Christianity was uprooted—sometimes with a vengeance—and sent to the margins of the academy.

Though increased secularization will likely continue to be a ruling principle in the academy for some time to come, there is reason to think that the exclusion of Christian theology and of Christian theologians' teaching is not an inevitability. This volume, a work in honor of John Cobb, presents eleven essays which are concerned with identifying how theology both should and can claim its rightful place in the academy.

From a practical point of view, the great strength of this volume is that it does not recommence the bitter intramural struggles which resulted in the extrusion of Christian theology from the academy. The rationale for that extrusion was based upon a Cartesian syllogism—i.e., theology is an enterprise conducted from a faith perspective; postulating faith is an action inaccessible to reason and thus not capable of discussion within the bounds of proper academic speech; theology is therefore extraneous.

The battles would immediately recommence if one advocated theology on the ground of the truth of the Christian faith. The essays in this volume argue, instead (with all the variety of postmodern thinking), that Cartesian rationality is itself incoherent, that all intellectual enterprises rest on assumed grounds which cannot in themselves be validated or invalidated, and that the scholarly study and teaching of theology demands no more dogmatism or sectarianism than does the study and teaching of the method and content of any discipline.

At this point in the argument, however, most of the essays take a curiously Orwellian turn. Some theologies are more dog-

matic and sectarian than others, the writers argue. Some are less discussible and more closely related to the beliefs and institutional needs of religious institutions. In short, some theologies are more worthy of inclusion in the academy than others.

For the editors and most of the authors, the right candidate for bringing theology back into nondenominational higher education is process theology. Process theology is particularly well equipped for such a task, they say, because it has grown up outside of sectarian institutions, entirely within the academy itself. It is no coincidence, of course, that process theology is the orientation of the editors—who are also the authors of some of the essays—and the focus of a very strong contribution by Ogden. Given that the essays are written in honor of John Cobb (arguably process theology's most distinguished figure) and written primarily by Cobb's one-time colleagues at Claremont, the emphasis on process theology is hardly a surprise.

To focus on process theology as the key to a new role for theology in the academy is, unfortunately, to prejudge a substantial issue. In full fruition, the study of theology is not limited to the study of ideas about a certain range of questions—and to the study of the expression and change of these ideas. In fact, the study of theological ideas and theologians makes no sense without the study of the institutional contexts and practices through which the ideas are generated and in which they play an ongoing role. Why then attempt to subsume "theology" within "process" for the purpose of reintroducing an attenuated version of that discipline to the academy, when one of the academy's constituting norms is universality of scope in its quest for learning?

One is also led to a prudential concern. Whenever one theology is extolled *a priori* as more "worthy" than another for inclusion within discussion rather than assessed within the flow of discussion, the mentality of sect and dogma re-emerges. Both the academy as it now stands and the justifiable pursuit of reintroducing Christian theology to that academy (at least on the same footing as the study of eastern religions) are harmed.

Moreover, I do not understand process theology to require the kind of belief in its own correctness that would entail silencing other voices rather than engaging in colloquy. Nor do I believe that the the editors succeed in their attempt to distinguish "critical" from "authoritarian" theology. They accomplish nothing more than the construction of a religious litmus test, thereby undermining their better purpose—i.e., improving the quality of "thick description" of religion in higher education, particularly the description of Christian religion. This purpose need not require a specific creedal preunderstanding.

These criticisms notwithstanding, the essays and the editorial matter are of high quality—they inform well about the issues and some of the history of the expulsion of Christian theology from the secular academy. Moreover, there is more heterogeneity among the essays than can be documented in very limited space. Three of the eleven authors are identified with contemporary neoorthodoxy, and four with combinations and permutations of more recent approaches—including constructive, deconstructive, death of god, critical, feminist, black, and liberationist theologies. Essays which are especially surprising in a book dominated by concerns about the more recent role of religion in the university are the neo-Calvinist piece by Verheyden and the essay by Pannenberg, a theologian who manages to be both very orthodox in direction and refreshingly adaptable to dialogue with thinkers who do not share his convictions.

Most importantly, although the editors and authors are primarily concerned with the case for process theology in the university, anyone interested in the case for (or against) a broader range of theologies in higher education will find this book valuable. Its scope extends more widely than its particular purposes, for within the focused arguments one finds an underlying articulation of concerns about which universities periodically need to be reminded.

Issues such as the nature of life, the intrinsic value and rights of nonhuman species, a sustainable economic order,

> the falsity and destructiveness of modern individualism, the possibility of affirming pluralism without relativism, and the way in which the disciplinary ordering of knowledge, research, and teaching defeats the central aim of the university: to educate for the common good. (p. vii)

—KENNETH ROTHMAN
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

The Heliand: The Saxon Gospel. By G. Ronald Murphy. Oxford University Press, 1992, 238 pages.

The *Heliand* ("Healer") was composed in the first half of the ninth century by an unknown missionary to the Saxon tribes. It is a creative reinterpretation of the Gospel story for an audience with a social context completely different from that of the classical Mediterranean world. As such, this work offers valuable insights into the difficulties and possibilities of cross-cultural communication. For instance, in the *Heliand*, Jesus is not surrounded by disciples, but by warrior-companions, his thanes. *Gehenna* becomes the Nordic Hel, and the *eschaton* shows similarities to the *Götterdämmerung*. The Garden of Eden looks somewhat like Valhalla, and the Sea of Galilee resembles the North Sea. The wilderness in which Jesus is tempted is a forest, not a desert. Satan even wears a helmet of invisibility, such as is found in Nordic mythology, in order to move unseen among the Romans during Jesus' trial.

As one of the earliest Old Saxon works to have been preserved, the *Heliand* is of interest, not only to students of religion and history, but also to literary scholars. G. Ronald Murphy's effort to make this fascinating document accessible to those of us who cannot read the original Old Saxon can only be praised. It was originally an epic divided into seventy-one songs, but Murphy has made the wise decision to render the poetry into prose, thus avoiding the need to recreate in English the Saxon

meter and rhyme. However, Murphy's English rendering is itself poetic and moving. Of course, experts will continue to return to the original manuscripts, but Murphy provides a wonderful starting place for all readers to enter the mysterious world of early medieval culture. For example, the original author rendered biblical place-names in Saxon style, so that Nazareth became *Nazarethburg*. Murphy tries to preserve the original sense by rendering it "Fort Nazareth." Such a simple change signals that the Gospel has moved out of a Near Eastern context and into that of a warrior society. Murphy's frequent explanatory footnotes also help make sense of the words used in the *Heliand*, such as the use of the English word "wizard" to translate the Saxon word for prophet.

Since the world of the *Heliand* is little known, Murphy also provides numerous explanatory footnotes that point out how medieval audiences may have understood certain passages. For instance, it may be that descriptions of Roman rule were intended to resonate with Saxon fears of their own Carolingian overlords. The reader is also presented with some of the details of Germanic mythology and shown places where the author tries to overcome it by changing the meaning of key words and concepts. Thus, Fate, which even controls the gods in Germanic mythology, becomes the will of God, not an independent and superior force. In this regard, it is interesting that Satan sins by trying to prevent the crucifixion of Jesus. It is a sin because it is an attempt to resist Fate—i.e., an attempt to oppose the will of God. Such footnotes are very helpful, but the volume would have been greatly strengthened by a more detailed introduction to Germanic mythology and to the medieval political and social situation. A brief analysis of the Christology of the *Heliand* ("Healer") would also prove valuable.

One of the most significant transformations of the New Testament stories by the *Heliand* is to be found in its address to, and validation of, the warrior nobility. Parables and sayings of Jesus which challenge the status quo (e.g., the Prodigal Son) are

omitted or significantly altered. Moreover, Mary, "the most beautiful and radiant of women," wraps the infant Jesus in "precious jewels." The shepherds in Luke are replaced with noble horse-guards. The poor are frequently looked down upon—e.g., in Song 15 the poor come to hear Jesus in order to get alms from the "many good thanes there who gladly gave alms to poor people." The author's purpose is to communicate the gospel to the most powerful members of a society because these could be great allies in the mission of the church. However, I wonder how much of the power of the gospel to change society was preserved in this retelling. Moreover, this work shows just how early anti-Semitism became intertwined with Christianity in Europe. The *Heliand* goes even beyond the Gospel of John in depicting the Jews as the enemies of Christ and his warrior-companions. Since the followers of Christ are always brave, wise, and beautiful, the enemies of Christ, the Jews, are shown to be double-dealing, cowardly, and ugly. Such portrayals would have a long and deadly history in the West.

The *Heliand* will not only interest students of the Middle Ages, but all persons interested in hermeneutics and communication. Currently there is a lot of criticism of Eurocentrism in academia and in the church, but the *Heliand* reminds us of an era almost lost in the mists of time when Europe was the third world (behind the Arabic and Chinese cultures) and the gospel was a foreign product. This work demonstrates the inevitable contextualization of the gospel. Those who are trying to re-image the gospel for non-Western cultures—or even postmodern Western cultures—will be interested in how this unknown poet sought to join Hellenistic/Jewish and Germanic concepts. Some will doubtless decide that this early effort at contextualization demonstrates more the dangers of such an enterprise than its benefits. However one ultimately judges the *Heliand*, it is a work worth reading and pondering in the light of modern concerns over multi-culturalism, missions, and hermeneutics.

—CRAIG D. ATWOOD
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Herrnhaag: Eine religiöse Kommunität im 18. Jahrhundert. By Hans-Walter Erbe. Friedrich Wittig Verlag, 1988, 222 pages.

The community of Herrnhaag in Wetteravia had a brief, but fascinating history. During the twelve years of its existence, it was a thriving community of 500–1000 persons who came from all over Europe to share in the religious and cultural life of the Brüdergemeine (the Brethren). They built an impressive physical culture, with several monumental buildings incorporated into an intentional civic plan similar in scale and scope to a princely residential city. The residents also composed and performed late-baroque music, which was heard daily in worship services. Painting, poetry, decorative furniture making, and other arts were enjoyed and encouraged. It was a thriving, vital community—a community celebrating its own creativity and seeking to realize the Christian potential for harmonious living. However, less than fifteen years after its founding, Herrnhaag lay deserted.

This history, the history of the glorious rise and dramatic collapse of Herrnhaag, is told by Hans-Walter Erbe in *Herrnhaag: Eine religiöse Kommunität im 18. Jahrhundert. Herrnhaag* is the first major work of a team of European scholars known as the "Arbeitskreis für Brüdergeschichte" (Working Group for the History of the Brethren). The Arbeitskreis has been meeting since 1982 and is composed of a select group of historians, theologians, Germanists, sociologists, pastors, art/music/archeticture historians, and archivists. Erbe gave this group effort its final form, so his name appears on the spine. The Arbeitskreis is to be commended for taking on the most controversial and obscure period in the history of the Brüdergemeine for its first effort. Since Zinzendorf's successors destroyed many of the original documents, which they felt were unedifying, there is much about Herrnhaag that may never be known. However, the Arbeitskreis did an admirable job of carefully studying the existing evidence without prejudice in an effort to understand the Herrnhaag experi-

ence. The final product is an elegant portrayal of a religious and social experiment that was unique in European history.

Erbe makes clear that the driving force behind the creative enterprises at Herrnhaag was religion. This town was the most brilliant expression of the religious movement led by Nikolaus von Zinzendorf, a German imperial count. Zinzendorf's Brüdergemeine included pietists, sectarians, Lutherans, Reformed, mystics, nobles, merchants, craftsmen, weavers, and others—all of whom were touched by his proclamation of experiential Christianity. The Brüdergemeine believed that religion is a matter of the heart, not reason; therefore, theological differences should not divide believers. Moreover, the best way to touch the heart was through music and art, not dialectics and polemics.

The core of the Brüdergemeine were the courageous and tenacious members of the Unitas Fratrum, an old Protestant church, who fled persecution in Moravia. These Moravians had been given protection by Zinzendorf on his estate and, under his leadership, had reformed themselves into a missionary church. Herrnhaag was intended to be a home for the Moravians and a training center for missionaries. In addition, it was to be a true congregation of Jesus, where all of the residents lived in continual worship, assisting each other's spiritual growth.

For approximately the first eight years, Herrnhaag fulfilled its founders' dreams. But in the late 1740's things went sour. In 1750 the town had to be abandoned. Buildings constructed to last centuries were left to fall into ruin, and the Brüdergemeine was nearly bankrupted by the loss of Herrnhaag. News of the devotional life in Herrnhaag, especially the life of the hundreds of single men and women, led to damaging rumors of scandalous activities. Even today, the religious language used in the late 1740's is a source of shame to members of the Brüdergemeine. Herrnhaag had become a symbol of the dangers of Zinzendorf's theology and the weakness of his movement. Unfortunately, there has been little examination into what actually occurred in Herrnhaag. What led to the excesses and what caused its swift downfall?

Erbe avoids the temptation to blame the destruction of Herrnhaag entirely on the theology or personality of Zinzendorf. However, he does chart the transformation of the religious language and ideas of Zinzendorf by the circle of single young men who had gathered around the charismatic figure of Rubusch during Zinzendorf's absence. Whereas Zinzendorf attempted to unite childlike simplicity with moral rigor and missionary zeal, this Rubusch-circle stressed childlikeness to the point of childishness. In fact, in Erbe's presentation, the piety of Herrnhaag appears to have slipped from festive adoration of the paradox of faith into adolescent antics. This young, powerful circle proved disruptive and gradually destroyed the original unity of purpose and communal sense of the first settlers of Herrnhaag. Strong personalities (e.g., Leonard Dober and A.G. Spangenberg) were either silenced or moved away. Weaker persons were swept up in the enthusiasm. Erbe quotes one resident, Anna Maria Lawatsch, who described the events of 1748–1749 as a darkness which came over the people. They did not even know how to help themselves (p. 153). However, despite Erbe's usually even-handed treatment of the group, his comparison of this event to the Nazi era seems unfair.

It is clear from Erbe's evidence that the religious and social life of Herrnhaag was out of control, even out of Zinzendorf's control. However, that in itself did not cause the closing of the community. The closing of the Herrnhaag was a political decision by the new count of Budingen, who felt that Zinzendorf was building a rival state. He demanded that the Herrnhaagers deny all allegiance to Zinzendorf. They chose exile instead.

There is little for a reviewer to dispute in this succinctly argued work. Erbe and his colleagues give details about the Herrnhaag community which have not appeared in print since the beginning of the century; however, more importantly, they offer their fresh interpretation of these events of the 1740's without the confessional or dogmatic concerns which have colored earlier works. Erbe himself provides an added perspective on how Herrnhaag fits into the cultural history of Germany. He sees it as

the time when two of Zinzendorf's great goals were sundered. After 1750, the Brüdergemeine increasingly restricted itself to missionary work and moralism. The creative, visionary, and energetic aspects of Zinzendorf's work would be continued by figures such as Goethe, Novalis, and Schleiermacher. Perhaps the Herrnhaag tragedy shows just how hard it is to combine church religion with aesthetic/creative religion.

CRAIG D. ATWOOD
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

The Presbyterians. By Randall Balmer and John R. Fitzmier. Denominations in America, Number 5. Greenwood Press, 1993, xi, 274 pages.

Randall Balmer, Associate Professor of Religion at Barnard College, Columbia University, and John R. Fitzmier, Associate Dean of Vanderbilt University Divinity School, offer a sweeping history of Presbyterianism in America and a biographical dictionary of important Presbyterians. *The Presbyterians* is the fifth volume in a contemporary survey of denominational histories. One hundred years ago, twenty-four scholars participated in publishing thirteen volumes on twenty different denominations, a set of works known popularly as the American Church History Series. Today among American religious historians, such "denominational histories" are often criticized for triumphalistic and parochial interpretations of particular religious traditions. The two scholars who collaborated in this current study, however, bring their broad knowledge of general American religious history to bear on this work and overcome the pitfalls of earlier denominational historians by placing their particular subject matter in its larger cultural, intellectual, and theological context.

The first half of this volume is comprised of a historical overview of the Presbyterian tradition in America. The work begins appropriately with an examination of the main themes of Reformed theology and the development of Presbyterianism in the

context of the Protestant Reformation. Four central theological themes are identified. The first, not surprisingly, is the Calvinists' understanding of the sovereignty of God. The doctrines of the redemptive work of Christ, sanctification through the Holy Spirit, and the reformed understanding of the church and the sacraments fill out this analysis. What has distinguished Presbyterians from other traditions within the larger family of Calvinism, the authors observe, is their distinctive ecclesiastical polity.

With this background, the authors divide the history of Presbyterianism in America into five chapters. The authors outline the growth of the Presbyterian Church during the colonial period by describing major milestones in the denomination's institutional development. These milestones include the Adopting Act of 1729, the first General Assembly of 1789, and Presbyterian participation in the major religious and political events of the era (most notably the First Great Awakening and the Revolutionary War). The two chapters devoted to nineteenth-century Presbyterian history profile the impact of the Second Great Awakening on Presbyterian theology, the subsequent Cumberland Presbyterian Church schism, and the Old School-New School division of 1837. Particular attention is paid to the role that the national crisis over slavery played in dividing the larger Presbyterian Church U.S.A. into four different denominations and the ensuing racial attitudes of postbellum Presbyterians.

The authors, moreover, provide an excellent summary of the role that Scottish common sense realism played within nineteenth-century Presbyterian theological orthodoxy and the roots of theological modernism and fundamentalism in the late nineteenth century. The authors, however, neglect to mention the reunion of the Old and New School branches of the Presbyterian Church in the North after the Civil War or to address its significance. The rise of the social gospel, the effects of the fundamentalist-modernist controversy on the church's theology and unity, and the reevaluation of missionary attitudes precipitated by the landmark *Re-Thinking Missions* (1933) are outlined in the fifth chapter. The

final chapter deals primarily with the history of the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. and Presbyterian Church U.S. after World War II. This chapter reviews the impact of America's tumultuous transition into what Sydney Ahlstrom described as the "post-Protestant" period. In this connection, the authors recount Presbyterian participation in the crises surrounding the Vietnam War, the civil rights movement, and the feminist movement. This chapter also addresses the influence of neo-orthodoxy on the United Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., as evidenced in the "Confession of 1967," as well as Presbyterian involvement in the ecumenical movement.

The biographical dictionary, the second part of the work, summarizes the thought and work of ninety-six prominent Presbyterians, ranging from Jane Addams to Theodore Sedgewick Wright. The authors include a broad selection of individuals from every period, theological perspective, gender, and race. Each entry includes a bibliography of the individual's major publications and a bibliography of other available biographical works.

Three additional features of the volume will prove to be especially helpful to readers. The three-page chronological outline will help readers keep their historical place as they trace their way through all of the church schisms, reunions, and other major events of Presbyterian history. The authors also provide a bibliographical essay that is excellent in both scope and detail. Finally, an exhaustive index makes the entire work user-friendly to the researcher who does not have time to read through the entire volume just to get a quick grasp of certain issues or individuals.

This volume makes a constructive contribution to the history of the Presbyterian tradition *within* American religious history. The authors fulfill their intended goal; they provide a brief survey of Presbyterian church history without slipping into the annoying triumphalism or short-sighted provincialism that marked, or marred, earlier denominational histories. Some scholars and Presbyterians may quibble with the particular accent that the authors place on their interpretation of certain events, but

generally the authors are admirably even-handed. The work will be of interest scholars, students, and laypeople, and it should be part of every library's circulating and reference collections. This volume, indeed the entire series, suggests that the histories of denominations may be entering a new stage of scholarly interest. Given the dearth of competent histories of American Presbyterianism, moreover, *The Presbyterians* may be useful for seminary courses in Presbyterian history—though the fifty-dollar cost is prohibitive for students.

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Theology, Ethics, and the Nineteenth-Century American College Ideal: Conserving a Rational World. By Thomas Edward Frank. Mellen Research University Press, 1993, xvi, 267 pages.

Exiles from Eden: Religion and the Academic Vocation in America. By Mark R. Schwehn. Oxford University Press, 1993, xiv, 143 pages.

Educational historians have typically argued that the rise of the modern research university in the late nineteenth century entailed the complete abandonment of the ideals and values of the antebellum college. In *Theology, Ethics, and the Nineteenth-Century American College Ideal*, Thomas Edward Frank challenges this assumption with his examination of the educational and theological ideals of William Jewett Tucker of Dartmouth College, William De Witt Hyde of Bowdoin College, and Henry Church King of Oberlin College. Frank argues that these three progressive college presidents adopted the new educational values and intellectual ideals associated with the revolution in higher education in the late nineteenth century, while at the same time expanding and reconstructing the worldview propagated by the antebellum college.

After a brief biographical introduction for each president, Frank outlines the key elements in the intellectual worldview (Scottish common sense realism, natural theology and moral philosophy) which antebellum colleges sought to teach students—and through which they sought to influence the affairs of the nation. This chapter is the best available introduction to this often confusing and easily caricatured subject matter. The final three chapters are devoted to uncovering the modern rational synthesis of these three educators. In the third chapter, Frank elucidates how these prominent liberal Protestants reconstructed a Christian theology and a natural theology and defended the uniqueness of Christianity upon the new philosophical foundation provided by Idealism. Though it is interesting to observe the discontinuity between older nineteenth century orthodoxy and the liberalism of the three presidents, this is nothing new for American historians. Frank, however, offers more. He draws out the larger areas of continuity between the theological ideas of the three presidents and the older orthodoxy. For example, having abandoned traditional proofs for the uniqueness of Christianity (i.e., miracles and fulfilled prophecy), the presidents were still committed to proffering positive reasons for Christianity. Like older apologists, they sought to show that revelation was complementary to the judgments of universal reason and conscience. Thus, they pointed to the universality and pervasiveness of Christianity, its acceptance by rational and progressive people, and its superior ethical and social insights. In the fourth chapter, Franks recovers the lines of continuity between the optimistic and progressive ethics of the three progressive presidents and the moral philosophy of their antebellum predecessors. In the final chapter, Frank explores how the three presidents sought to realize their new rational synthesis through collegiate education. "Their compuses were living expressions of the needed synthesis, microcosms of the universal effort to bring the new learning to bear on human problems while producing individuals capable of synthesizing knowledge into moral ends" (p. 192). They placed the older purpose of antebel-

lum collegiate education, integrating knowledge and action based on the common sense and educated character of rational persons, within a new framework of dynamism and change. As America's age of innocence came to a close with the World War I, so did the new rational synthesis of these presidents.

Frank's work offers a useful corrective to that of earlier historians, for the latter tended to focus exclusively on the differences between traditional nineteenth-century educational orthodoxy and the progressive educational reformers, or between theological orthodoxy and liberal Protestantism. According to Frank, and *contra* many earlier educational historians, the American college did not slip into the educational backwaters when the postbellum revolution in higher education created modern research universities. However, one may still disagree with certain elements of Frank's interpretations. For example, Frank suggests that the antebellum educational ideals collapsed rather quickly amidst the revolution in higher education. Though the older ideals collapsed, Hyde, King, and Tucker were in the vanguard of the revolution—and many other colleges were to slowly follow the patterns established at Bowdoin, Dartmouth, and Oberlin. Such criticisms are minor and do not detract from Frank's valuable contribution to American educational, intellectual, and religious history.

Schwehn, formerly of the University of Chicago and presently at Valparaiso University, offers a thought-provoking essay on the state of the university now that the ideal modern college (e.g., those constructed by Tucker, Hyde, and King) is collapsing in the face of postmodernism. Unlike the diatribes of the anti-politically correct Dinesh D'Souza and the castigations of Allan Bloom and those of his ilk who long to revive Plato's ideal university (or, rather, their Ivy-league college experience in the 1950s), Schwehn displays no acrimony as he discusses what he perceives to be the intellectual and moral weaknesses of the modern research university. He offers a positive understanding of the purpose and value of the university within a pluralistic intellectual and social context.

Persons interested in the welfare of the modern research university often complain that faculty interest in advancing scholarship has subverted the transmission of knowledge and character formation. Too many academics wrongly think, Schwehn argues, that the creation of knowledge excludes these other two historic purposes of higher education. Modern academics, he contends, fail to realize that epistemologies have ethical implications. In the first chapter, Schwehn traces the current conception of the university back to Germany and finds its *locus classicus* in Max Weber's address, "Wissenschaft als Beruf." Weber's conception of the academic vocation—that the academic is one who makes knowledge—has attained hegemony over all others. Weber forbade academics *qua academics* from answering questions of ultimate meaning and value within the academy. In the most fascinating section of the essay, Schwehn points out how Weber's understanding of the purpose of higher education involved an appropriation and transmutation of religious language for distinctly secular purposes. In the second and third chapters, Schwehn proposes (not unlike Hyde, King, and Tucker) a reappropriation of certain religious virtues within the university. After reviewing how the question of community has replaced the epistemological question as foundational for all intellectual inquiries, Schwehn presents a redescription for the present-day academy. The four virtues of humility, faith, self-sacrifice and charity, Schwehn contends, still inform the purpose of the academy, albeit in more secular forms. Although these virtues are Christian in origin, he argues, they are not the exclusive capital of theists alone. Thus, Schwehn is not suggesting that the university return to some romantic "golden age." If institutions of higher education are to transcend the perils of the modern Weberian university, Schwehn argues, these four virtues should mold the purpose of the university. Thus, universities would have the newly defined task of seeking an understanding of the world through communal inquiry. In the fourth chapter, Schwehn answers sixteen questions which critics have asked concerning his proposal.

These questions range from whether a renewed interest in teaching would foster mediocrity in the university to whether character formation is even possible once students reach the university. Why do so many contemporary academics believe that their sense of vocation ought to conform to the ideal type developed by Weber? Is there a secular equivalent to spirituality which gives meaning to the academic vocation? Does such an equivalent improve on earlier religious accounts of the human condition? In the fifth chapter, Schwehn answers these questions through an examination of *The Education of Henry Adams* (1918). Adams's *Education*, Schwehn asserts, not only depicts what many academics believe to be the ideal cognitive and ethical evolution of twentieth-century college students and faculty, but also reveals the most widespread and uncritically held assumption about spiritual formation today: "namely, that our lives have meaning *only* insofar as we create that meaning *for ourselves* through language and other forms of expression." Schwehn ends with a comparison of "the modernist myth of education" and the biblical myth that it sought to subvert and replace. He exegetes the Genesis account of creation, its quest for community, the perilous pursuit of knowledge as power, and the purpose of education in a disordered world. Finally, he concludes that Adam's education in the book of Genesis is superior to Adams's *Education*.

In the present generation, higher education is again amidst a transition much like that which Hyde, King and Tucker experienced a century ago. Like the three progressive presidents, Schwehn offers a universal, rational, and religiously-informed philosophy of education—not for collegiate education, but for the postmodern university. Only time will tell whether his constructive criticisms or prescription will be adopted, or even welcomed, in the postmodern, pluralistic university.

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Books Received

Balentine, Samuel, *Prayer and the Hebrew Scriptures* (Fortress Press, 1993)

Bos, A. David, *A Practical Guide to Community Ministry* (Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993)

Capps, Donald, *The Poet's Gift: Toward the Renewal of Pastoral Care* (Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993)

Childs, Brevard S., *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Fortress Press, 1993)

Coffin, William Sloane, *A Passion for the Possible: A Message to U.S. Churches* (Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993)

Kysar, Robert, *John, The Maverick Gospel* (Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993)

McKenzie, Steven L. and Stephen R. Haynes (eds.), *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application* (Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993)

Panikkar, Raimon, *A Dwelling Place for Wisdom* (Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993)

Russell, Letty M., *Church in the Round: Feminist Interretation of the Church* (Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993)

Williamson, Clark M., *A Guest in the House of Israel* (Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993)

Acknowledgments

"Speech and Silence in the Servant Passages: Toward a Final-Form Reading of the Book of Isaiah."

This article grew from a chapter in a Master's thesis written at Columbia Theological Seminary under the guidance of Walter Brueggemann, whose advice and encouragement were invaluable. Another version was presented at the 1992 southeast regional SBL meeting, where it benefitted greatly from the comments of participants in the Hebrew Bible section.

—TOD LINAFELT

"The Return from the Further Shore: Theological Implications of Christian *Sannyasa*"

For their advice during the writing of this essay, I would like to acknowledge Professors Anne Carr and Frank Reynolds of the University of Chicago and Francis X. Clooney, S.J., of Boston College.

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